University of Alberta

Russia's Centres and Peripheries in the News

by

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ABSTRACT

The present thesis explores media representations of Russia's federal regions on the material of the news provided by a major Russian news agency, RIA Novosti. The main hypothesis underlying the study is that the Central Region is represented in the news in the positive light, i.e. as the centre, whereas the rest of the regions appear in the negative light, i.e. as the periphery. Inferences about the central or peripheral representation of a region are based on the quantitative analysis of such news features as the amount of news, topics, agents, pictures and places. The study reveals that the Central Region is, indeed, represented as the centre, whereas most of Russia's regions appear as peripheries. The findings also suggest that the centre-periphery divide as projected through the news might also be interpreted as the dichotomy between the capital and the rest of the country.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Introduction

The centre-periphery hierarchy of places is present in any country. The role of the centre is normally played by the capital and/or the surrounding area: it accumulates power, social capital, material wealth and prestige. The nature and size of the gap between the centre and the periphery vary from country to country. In some states (e.g., in Germany), the centre-periphery divide is rather tentative since the functions of the centre (administrative, political, economic, cultural and historical) are distributed among several cities and/or regions.

As opposite to polities with multiple centres, there are countries that have only one centre. Russia is a very typical example of a centralized state. In Russia, the roles of the administrative, political, economic and historical centres are concentrated in the Central Region[1] and its centre, Moscow. The superior status of the Central Region among Russia's regions is reflected in its name itself. The name has nothing to do with the geographical position of the region; rather, it reflects the fact that the Central Region is the historical part of the Russian State formed around its centre, Moscow. The Central Region is the most populated and the most economically developed area of the country. Moscow is the administrative, political, economic and historic centre of the country. The accumulation of so many functions by one city (and the area around it) makes the disparity between the centre and the periphery very drastic.

The centre-periphery disposition (with regard to Russia's context) is reflected in the saying "Moscow is not Russia". The alternative version of this statement is "Russia ends where Moscow area (or, the Central Region) begins". These sayings reflect the disparity between Moscow (Moscow area and the Central Region) and the rest of the country.

The present thesis will address the possible differences in the media coverage of Russia's centre vs. the periphery. The question raised in this study is whether in the news, the Central Region is given more attention and is represented in a more positive light than

[1] An area of approximately 400 km around Moscow, a unit of the administrative-geographic division of the Russian Federation.

the remaining regions, with the effect that the former lives up to its name and appears as the centre and the latter appear as the periphery on the Central Region's background. The contribution of Moscow to the coverage of the Central Region will be addressed as well.

1.2. Literature review

In order to understand the specifics of Russia's centre-periphery divide, one needs to have a general idea of the centre-periphery relationship at large. This issue is addressed in subsection 1.2.1., "The centre-periphery divide in society". Subsection 1.2.2., "The centre-periphery divide in the Russian society" aims to provide background information about the centre-periphery divide in Russia specifically. Finally, subsection 1.2.3., "Media representations of the centre-periphery divide" situates the present study in the body of the existing media research on the centre-periphery divide.

1.2.1. The centre-periphery divide in society

This subsection of the literature review outlines the general characteristics of the centre-periphery divide as a universal phenomenon.

Socio-cultural spaces, such as cities, countries and the globe at large, can be characterized in terms of the centre and the periphery. An attempt to account for the centre-periphery divide in society at large was made by an American sociologist Edward Shils. Shils (1975) states that any society functions and develops through the interaction of the centre and the periphery which he sees as "complementary, mutually dependent" (p. 8). The centre plays the decisive role in the functioning of the society, accumulating decision-making bodies and the creative potential of the society. With the help of its power institutions and agents, the centre sets a model for the whole society to act upon. "The concept of the 'centre' embodies the sacred values, beliefs and symbols through which the social order is conducted..." (Avraham, 2006, p. 72). According to Kimmerling (as cited in Avraham, 2006, p. 72) "the periphery... is passive and takes no part in the creation or distribution of customs and conventions; [it] receives these constructs from the centre and acts accordingly". According to Henrikson (1980), the

centre and the periphery are divided by is a physical, social and psychological distance. It is also noteworthy that the centre uses the periphery's dependence to hold the society together (Shils, 1975).

Although the existence of the centre and the periphery is characteristic of any society, the exact "shape" of the centre-periphery divide varies from country to country. The following subsection of the literature review introduces the reader to Russia's major variant of the centre-periphery divide, the capital vs. the rest of the country. This centre-periphery paradigm is presented from various perspectives: historic, semantic, philological, sociological and cultural.

1.2.2. The centre-periphery divide in the Russian society

The traditional centre-periphery paradigm in Russia is the capital vs. the rest of the country. The latter is referred to as *provintsiia* (literally, "the province"). The following subsection dwells on the historical premises of the capital-provintsiia divide.

1.2.2.1. Historical perspective

The gap between the capital and provintsiia with regard to power, wealth and access to education and culture can be explained by looking into the history of Russia from the 16th century on. Sharov (1999) points out that the super-centralized state that has existed in Russia since the 16th century through the 20th century (from Ivan the Terrible to Putin) has kept the periphery in fear of the centre (i.e. the capital), preventing it from developing a "personality" and initiative. In Imperial Russia, the villainage system which was abolished in mid-19th century, the absence of social agents of change (such as the bourgeoisie in Western Europe) coupled with the size of the country halted the development of provintsiia. Through the Soviet regime, the periphery remained dormant and docile. Sharov (1999) believes that Moscow's initiatives and policies encouraging the population to migrate inside the country were aimed at preventing the people from developing local patriotism which was seen as the first step to separatism. Sannikova (2007) notes that the construction of identical residential and administrative buildings in

different parts of the USSR was part of the homogenization policy maintained by the Soviet Moscow. Sharov (1999) states that the Soviet power had succeeded in inspiring *provintsiia* with the awe and reverence of Moscow and prevented it from developing any regional identity. To the Soviet people, Moscow had always been positioned as the "heart of Russia" glorified in any artistic genre possible, whereas the rest of the country had remained anonymous. Zhel'vis (2006) adds that due to the Soviet system of distribution of goods and services, the residents of *provintsiia* had developed the so-called provinciality complex. The access to the economic benefits mirrored the administrative hierarchy of the country's locales: "the capital of the USSR was supplied best of all, it was followed by the capitals of republics, then administrative centres within the republics..." and so on until the scarce flow of supplies reached a remote village (Zhel'vis, 2006, p. 44). Thus, the privileged economic status of Moscow as the "shop-window of socialism" as compared to the rest of the country could not but evoke the inferiority complex in *provintsiia* residents and the superiority complex in the capital dwellers.

Yeltsin's period of the Russian history was marked by the decentralization of the country. The federal government considerably reduced its administrative and economic participation in the life of *provintsiia.* Yeltsin's decentralization policy could have been beneficial to *provintsiia* since it was a chance to learn the lesson of self-governance and economic independence after decades of Moscow's administrative dictatorship and command economy. However, the absence of a self-governance experience prevented *provintsiia* from using its potential: by the end of Yeltzin's term, the economic and social-cultural gap between the centre and the periphery became enormous (Shevtsova, 1999). Under President Putin, the country started to regain stability and national consciousness. At the same time, the power differential between the centre and the periphery moved towards what it used to be during the Soviet times. President Putin headed for the centralization of the country soon after his election. The first major landmark of this policy was the introduction of the institute of President's Representative in 2000 whose function is to ensure the realization of President's constitutional powers in a region and the creation of the corresponding offices in all seven regions of Russia, the Centre, the North-West, the Volga, the South, the Urals, Siberia and the Far East. The

second major landmark of Putin's centralization policy is modifications to the institute of the regional governor. Before 2004, the leaders of Russia's regional government (*gubernatory* 'governors') were to be elected by the public. In 2004, President Putin initiated a bill that abolishes direct gubernatorial elections. This legislative initiative was passed by the Russian Parliament: the new bill authorizes President: 1) to appoint a regional governor on the recommendation of a region's parliament and; 2) to recall a regional governor from office on the basis of his/her inadequacy as perceived by President himself or the regional parliament. Thus, since the law makes regional governors accountable to President, their opportunities of contesting President's power are greatly reduced. In Shevtsova's opinion (2005), the current centralization policy of the federal government could augment the antagonism between the centre and the periphery.

The following subsection of the literature review explores how the lower status of *provintsiia* in relation to the capital is reflected in the language system and in the language use.

1.2.2.2. Semantic perspective

Let us consider the connotations associated with the concepts of the capital and *provintsiia*. The word *provintsiia* entered the Russian lexicon in late 17th century (Zaiontz, 2006). Peter the Great introduced the Polish *provincja* as a term for a new administrative unit associated with his administrative reform. Originally, the Russian *provintsiia* had a neutral terminological meaning, i.e. an administrative unit. In the course of time, its semantics acquired a negative connotation which was first registered in Dal' Thesaurus and is now registered in contemporary thesauri of the Russian language. In Dal's Dictionary, *provintsial* 'a resident of *provintsiia*' is interpreted as "a person living not in the capital, a resident of the back of beyond".[2] Ozhegov's Dictionary of the Russian language defines *provintsiia* as "a territory of a country other than the capital, the

[2] In *Tolkovyi Slovar' Dalia ON-LINE* retrieved July, 7, 2007 from http://vidahl.agava.ru/cgi-bin/dic.cgi?p=182&t=33587

centre", giving an example "the backwoods *provintsiia*".[3] The adjective *provintsial'nyi* 'provincial' is presented with two meanings: 1) direct, i.e. belonging to *provintsiia*; and 2) metaphorical, i.e. backward, naïve, plain.[4] In Efremova's Contemporary Thesaurus of Russian, *provintsiia* is "a place that is far away from the capital, a major cultural centre…, a symbol of inertness, backwardness".[5] It is noteworthy that for native speakers of Russian, the word ***provintsiia*** evokes an association with ***provinnost'*** 'fault' which brings *provintsiia* close to the concept of guilt (Kislov and Shapko, 2000).

The Russian ***stolitsa*** 'capital' originated from the word *stol* which used to designate the monarch's throne.[6] Ozhegov's Dictionary of the Russian language defines *stolitsa* as "the major city of a state, normally, the home to the government and government institutions".[7] In Efremova's Contemporary Thesaurus of Russian, the derivative adjective *stolichnyi* has only a direct meaning, i.e. "pertaining to the capital".[8] Thus, in contrast to the concept of *provintsiia*, dictionaries do not register any connotations (either negative or positive) associated with the word *stolitsa*. Yet, Korchevskaia (2002), in her study of the associative field of concept "Moscow" for native speakers of Russian, identifies such positive connotations, as "primary", "ancient", "native", "people's", "huge".

The positive connotations of the concept *stolitsa* and the negative connotations of the concept *provintsiia* that are now registered in contemporary Russian and reflect the attitudes of native Russian speakers to the centre and the periphery could have originated from the unbalanced relationship between the capital and the rest of the country as outlined in the subsection 1.2.2.1, "The historic perspective". However, the attitudes and opinions of people to a certain issue are affected not only by real life circumstances, but also by how that issue is represented. A powerful influence on Russian collective

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[3] In *Ozhegov Thesaurus* retrieved July, 7, 2007 from http://www.ozhegov.ru/slovo/40514.html
[4] In *Ozhegov Thesaurus* retrieved July, 7, 2007 from http://www.ozhegov.ru/slovo/40517.html
[5] In *Slovari i Entsiklopedii On-line* retrieved July, 7, 2007 from http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/efremova/228687/%D0%9F%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%BD%D1%86%D0%B8%D1%8F
[6] The word *stol* means 'table' in Modern Russian.
[7] In *Ozhegov Thesaurus* retrieved July, 7, 2007 from http://www.ozhegov.ru/slovo/51516.html
[8] In *Slovari i Entsiklopedii On-line* retrieved July, 7, 2007 from http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/efremova/250531/%D0%A1%D1%82%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%BD%D1%8B%D0%B9

consciousness is Russian classic literature. Its representation of the capital and *provintsiia* is addressed in the following section, "The philological perspective".

1.2.2.3. Philological perspective

The disposition of the capital and *provintsiia* has been one of the key themes in the Russian classic literature. Domanskii (1998) in his study of Chekhov's works concludes that: "Not only the capital appears as the centre of culture, morality, it is also associated with the idea of real, harmonic life in general...*Provintsiia*, in contrast, accumulates all the most hideous and gruesome sides of human existence" (p. 170). The negative image of the Russian periphery also looms in the literary works of Ostrovskii (e.g. 'Thunderstorm') and Saltykov-Shchedrin with his collective image of a Russian provincial city Glupov (literally, 'Sillytown') in his "History of a Town". Gogol', in his "Dead Souls", appears to be the greatest denouncer of *provintsiia* (Ertner, 2005). Thus, Russian classical literature can be seen as an important contributor to the centre-periphery construct in the Russian the collective consciousness.[9]

Thus, classic Russian literature suggests that the capital and *provintsiia* of the 19th and early 20th centuries are totally different social worlds. The question of whether this can be said about contemporary Russian society is explored by sociologists. The sociological perspective on the centre-periphery divide in Russia is presented below.

1.2.2.4. Sociological perspective

A number of sociological studies suggest that residents of the capital and *provintsiia* are different socio-psychological types. Kogan (1997) argues that *provintsiia* is home to a social psychological personality type that can be described as a *provintsial,* i.e. "a person of low culture; a philistine with no civil ideals; a typical conformist, afraid of the mighty of this world, worshipping all that comes from the capital" (p. 122). Sociologists also studied the capital and *provintsiia* personality types as perceived and defined by the

[9] It would be interesting to trace the projection of the centre-periphery dichotomy in Soviet and contemporary Russian literature, but the researcher does not have sufficient data to dwell on the issue.

population itself. A sociological study "The Metropolises and *provintsiias* in contemporary Russia: Images and reality" conducted by the Russian Academy of Sciences on par with The Russian Independent Institute of Social and National Problems revealed that perceived Moscow's residents were perceived as "energetic/dynamic, educated, but at the same time vulnerable to various life risks and also morally and psychologically troubled", while residents of the *provintsiia* were perceived as "honest, frank and kind people, though not very dynamic".[10] (The survey was conducted in March-April, 2003 and encompassed 2,327 respondents from all the seven administrative regions of Russia).

Attitudes of the capital and *provintsiia* residents towards each other is another focus of the sociological research in Russia. According to Petukhov (2006), Research Director of VTSIOM (The All-Russia Polling Centre), there has been a pronounced alienation and dislike in the attitudes of the capital and *provintsiia* [residents] towards each other (as registered by national public polls conducted by the central polling body VTSIOM in the past 10 years). The following are the headlines of the reports about such polls found in national newspapers: *Moskvichei v Rossii nenavidiat uzhe 2/3 sograzhdan* 'Two Thirds of Compatriots in Russia Hate Muscovites' (Argumenty i Fakty, 07.09.04),[11] *Oni bogatye i zhadnye. Bol'shinstvo rossiian s moskvichami ne znakomy, no zaochno ikh ne liubiat* 'They Are Rich and Greedy. Most Russian people do not know Muscovites personally, but hate them by default' (Novye Izvestiia, 10.09.2006),[12] *"Gorod-parazit" Moskva i liberal'naia rossiiskaia glubinka* 'The 'Parasite City' of Moscow and the Liberal Russian Back of Beyond' (Rosbalt, 10.24.2005).[13]

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[10] Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. (2004). Megapolisy i provintsii v sovremennoi Rossii: Obrazy i real'nost'. Analiticheskii doklad. Retrieved July 9, 2007, from http://www.fesmos.ru/Pubikat/5_Megapolis2004/Mega_rus_1.html#??????%20

[11] Argumenty i Fakty. (2004). Moskvichei v Rossii nenavidiat uzhe 2/3 sograzhdan. Retrieved July 10, 2007, from http://fin.aif.ru/news/article012CC/default.asp

[12] Novye Izvestiia. (2006). Oni bogatye i zhadnye. Bol'shinstvo rossiian s moskvichami ne znakomy, no zaochno ikh ne liubiat. Retrieved July 10, 2007, from http://www.newizv.ru/news/2006-10-09/55605/

[13] Rosbalt. (2005). "Gorod-parazit" Moskva i liberal'naia rossiiskaia glubinka. Retrieved July 10, 2007, from http://www.rosbalt.ru/2005/10/24/232023.html

The capital vs. *provintsiia* has been a traditional centre-periphery paradigm in a number of disciplines: history, philology, linguistics and sociology. Yet, the capital vs. *provintsiia* is not the only centre-periphery axis in the Russian society. A broader perspective on the centre-periphery divide in Russia as offered by Russian cultural studies is discussed in the following subsection.

1.2.2.5. Cultural studies perspective

Russian cultural studies have a more complex idea of the centre-periphery divide in Russia that goes beyond the traditional capital-*provintsiia* dichotomy. Rakov (2003) sees the centre-periphery divide in Russia as a hierarchy in which the upper pier is Moscow and Saint Petersburg, the middle pier is other major cities of Russia, the bottom pier is towns and villages. Thus, in Rakov's view, there are two centres rather than one and the periphery is not homogeneous but ranked. The traditional capital-*provintsiia* dichotomy "explains" the centre-periphery divide in geographical terms, whereas Rakov's centre-periphery hierarchy is based on the notions of modernity and urbanity-rurality. Moscow and Saint Petersburg constitute the centre since they live in the post-modern society, with their extensive use of technology, high tempo of life and the individualist mentality. Russian cities other than Moscow and Saint Petersburg are between the centre and the periphery since they are still in transition from the modern to the post-modern society. Small towns and villages are the periphery since they are stuck at the stage of the traditional society with its natural economy (or, subsistence farming) and the collectivist consciousness.

The traditional capital-*provintsiia* paradigm is criticized in Russian cultural studies for its simplistic character. In particular, Rozenberg (2005) believes that the term *provintsiia* is an overgeneralization that obscures the possible diversity of Russia's places and contains the implicit assumption that any two places in Russia excluding Moscow are alike. (However, Rozenberg does not question the existence of the cultural gap between the capital and the rest of country, i.e. *provintsiia*). He believes that a suitable unit of analysis in the centre-periphery studies is a *region*. Elaborating on this idea, one could

hypothesize that the centre-periphery divide could lie among the regions, rather than among the capital vs. the rest of the country.

The following subsection of the literature review addresses the centre-periphery divide within one country as projected in media coverage.

1.2.3. Media representations of the centre-periphery divide

Media is an important social constructor of reality in today's world: much of the public's knowledge, beliefs and attitudes to a certain issue/social group/place can be shaped by how that issue/social group/place is represented in media, if represented at all. In the recent decades, media have been explored with regard to their role in the sustaining of discrimination against various social groups, such as racial minorities (Van Dijk, 1993), immigrants (Van Leeuwen, 1995), sexual minorities (Hart, 2000), ethnic minorities (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001), the homeless (Huckin, 2002), the unemployed (Wodak and Van Leeuwen, 2002) and the elderly (Healey and Ross, 2002). Research on the hegemonic relationship between the centre and the periphery as projected in media is very limited. Among the few studies on the topic are Eli Avraham's "Social-political environment, journalism practice and coverage of minorities: The case of the marginal towns in Israel" (Avraham, 2002) and "Media, power and space: ways of constructing the periphery as the "other" (Avraham, 2006) in which he explored the centre-periphery divide in Israel as projected in national news. Avraham's studies suggest that national media play a significant role in the social construction of the centre-periphery dichotomy through coverage patterns of the country's locales: "…cities that are national centres of political, social, economic or cultural activity are covered in relation to 'important news' such as political or economic events…" (Avraham, 2002, p. 70). As to peripheral places, they tend to be ignored by the national media; if covered, such places are spoken about in connection with negative events: crime, breakdown of the social order and disasters (Avraham, 2002). The 2002 study focuses on the factors behind the differences in the media representation of the centre and the periphery. The 2006 study looks into the

diverse strategies leading to the construction of the periphery's image as the other who is unimportant, marginal or negligible.

No studies have been found on the representation of the centre and the periphery in Russian media. Yet, alternative sources indicate that the hegemonic relationship between Russia's centre and the periphery can be traced in the practices of Moscow-based media. According to journalist Konoplev (2005), the author of a web project "Information Starvation", the centre's "information monopoly" is another major source of *provintsiia*'s dissatisfaction with the centre, along with Moscow's economic and political hegemony. Russia's national mass media which are based in the capital and controlled by Moscow's political and business elites over-represent Moscow and under-represent the rest of the country, projecting the perspective of the centre only. In his article "Information starvation", Konoplev (2005) writes: "Where are we, the people of the huge state, in these news?" (p. 29). Konoplev's concern about the importance of the centre and the unimportance of the periphery as projected in the central media is justified by the fact that the central media, indeed, have a great potential in indoctrinating the public into a certain perspective. Sociological surveys testify that the central media are the major source of information for the Russian public. In 2004, the Russian Academy of Sciences on par with The Russian Independent Institute of Social and National Problems published a report "The Metropolises and Provintsii: Images and Reality" which was based on 2003 all-Russia survey conducted in all regions of Russia with 2,327 respondents. The survey revealed that 84 % of Muscovites and 94 % of the *provintsiia* residents form their perceptions of regions other that theirs on the basis of the information provided by the central media – TV, newspapers and radio.[14] This situation can be accounted for by the fact that Russia's media system is dominated by vertical links: there is almost no information exchange among regional media, i.e. the information on a neighbor region is available through the national media only (Titkov, 1999). Thus, it is very important to study the central media with regard to their representation of the centre vs. the periphery.

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[14] Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. (2004). Megapolisy i provintsii v sovremennoi Rossii: Obrazy i real'nost'. Analiticheskii doklad. Retrieved July 9, 2007, from http://www.fesmos.ru/Pubikat/5_Megapolis2004/Mega_rus_2.html#?????????%20

1.3. Hypotheses

As follows from the literature review, Russia's centre-periphery divide has been traditionally analyzed through the capital vs. the rest of the country paradigm. The gap between the capital and the rest of the country first manifested itself in the 16th century and has grown ever since. During the Soviet epoch, the command-distributive economy with its favouritism of the centre over the periphery contributed to the material and psychological distance between Moscow and the rest of the country. In post-Soviet years, the disparity between the centre and the periphery was aggravated by the booming economic growth of Moscow. The question of the centre-periphery relationship in Russia is particularly topical at present in view of the ongoing centralization policy launched by President Putin in 2000. Part of this policy was the introduction of the controlling institute of President's Representative in the regions and the introduction of President-appointed regional governors instead of elected governors. Thus, under President Putin, Moscow has regained the control it had lost under Yeltsin. The present study could shed some light on whether the imbalance in the power relations between Russia's centre and the periphery is reflected in media.

Apart from the topicality of the issue of the centre-periphery divide in contemporary Russia, the need for the present study is warranted by the absence of systematic research on media representations of Russia's centre-periphery divide.

The present study is prompted by Ali Avraham's research on Israel's centre-periphery as projected in the news from which it follows that the centre is overrepresented and covered in connection with positive events, whereas the periphery is underrepresented and covered in connection with negative events. As mentioned above, there are no media studies on Russia's centre-periphery to support Avraham's findings. Yet, non-academic sources in the face of media professionals indicate that Moscow is overrepresented in comparison to the rest of the country.

Before one proceeds to the hypotheses, it is necessary to clarify what is referred to as the centre and what is meant by the periphery in Russia. Traditionally, the centre has been equated with the capital and the periphery has been equated with the rest of the country (and referred to as *provintsiia*). However, this paradigm is problematic: the

term *provintsiia* seems to be an overgeneralization imposing the implication that all places in Russia except Moscow are alike. Another problem with the capital vs. the rest of the country paradigm is that it contains only two units of analysis which are not comparable ("oranges and apples" problem). The alternative way of exploring the centre-periphery divide in Russia is to analyze the representations of comparable units, such as Russia's seven federal regions: the Centre, the North-West, the Volga, the South, the Urals, Siberia and the Far East. It can be hypothesized that the role of the centre will be played by the Central Region: since the centre of this area is Moscow, it could be that the Central Region enjoys the privileges associated with the proximity to Moscow (e.g., investments). Accordingly, the role of the periphery could be left to the remaining six regions of Russia, which will be referred to as the provincial regions. Thus, the hypotheses of the present study will read as follows:

- in the news, the Central Region will be represented in the most positive light, i.e. as the centre;
- in the news, the provincial regions will be represented mostly in the negative light, i.e. as the periphery.

To reflect the role of Moscow in the hypothesized centrality of the Central Regions, another hypothesis is introduced:

- in the news, Moscow will account for most of the positive image of the Central region.

While the provincial regions are expected to be represented in the negative light, there is a probability that not all of them will appear equally negative. To capture the possible differences in the representation of the provincial regions and to show how they are different from the Central Region, it would be useful to rate the regions by degrees of centrality/peripherality. The rating of the regions will be a satellite task to serve the primary goal of this study which is to find out whether the news project the centre-periphery divide among Russia's regions and whether the role of the centre is played by the Central region (including Moscow) and the role of the periphery is played by the provincial regions.

The present study is a quantitative analysis of news. The data are analyzed quantitatively since the corpus is quite large. The reason for working with a large amount of data is that the study aims to reveal the major trends pertaining to the representation of the centre and the periphery in the news, i.e. "big picture" which can be the accumulation of small details that might not be very meaningful by themselves.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

2.1. The data

The source of the data for the present study is the coverage of Russia's regions by the Russian news agency *RIA Novosti*. There are a number of reasons for selecting this particular news agency as the source of the data. First, RIA Novosti is the largest news agency in Russia: it has a network of correspondents all over the country and abroad. Its website is among the top ten most visited news sites in the Russian internet. Furthermore, as of May 2007, RIA Novosti was the most cited news source in the Russian internet media, its citation index amounting to 21,000 references per month, according to Yandex.ru (a Russian analogue of Google.com).[15] The high citation rate of RIA Novosti indicates that a great many of internet sites use it as the source for the news and other material: many news agencies and most entertainment websites do not have the facilities to "produce" a large amount of news. The fact that such websites use the content of RIA Novosti means that they choose from what RIA Novosti has to offer. In other words, RIA Novosti's agenda affects the agenda of many major and minor news providers. As a result, the representation of reality that is projected through RIA Novosti influences the representations of reality by other media. Thus, RIA Novosti might be one of the most influential disseminators of the public's ideas of the centres and peripheries among Russia's regions.

The data for the study were collected retrospectively, i.e. from the archives of *RIA Novosti* news site. The reason for the retrospective data collection is that the archives conveniently group the news by regions. The archived news differ from the current news only in the lay-out which is not explored in this study. The data collection was started in May 2007. Since the researcher strived to explore the most recent data, the time frame was to include four months, from January through April 2007. However, January was excluded from the corpus since the January sample is not comparable to the samples of other months: the amount of *RIA Novosti* news for January is much

[15] Yandex.ru (2007) retrieved May, 13, 2007 from http://yaca.yandex.ru/yca/ungrp/cat/Media/

smaller than the amount of news for other months. This can be explained by the fact January is the time of the New Year and Christmas holidays in Russia. The February, March and April samples are comparable to one another not only in the size, but also in the quality of news: no extra-ordinary events (e.g., national elections or major crises) were reported during this period of time.

The corpus of the study consists of 3,635 news stories.

2.2. The categories

Below is a brief overview of the categories that will be used to make the centre-periphery inferences about the regions. As follows from Avraham's study of the representation patterns of Israeli geographic periphery, the primary projected characteristic of the centre/periphery is importance/unimportance (Avraham, 2006). The centre is portrayed as the source of important events that affect other places in the country and the seat of "important" people who make decisions that are crucial for the nation. The periphery is represented as unimportant (to the centre and to other peripheries) in the sense that it is not the place where history is made: the events and people of the periphery do not determine the lives of other places. The category of importance/unimportance is inherent in such aspects of the regions' news coverage as the total amount of news on a region, the ratio of the pictured news, the ratio of the news story participants who are referred to by names and the ratio of pictures of humans. The great amount of news on a region, the great amount of pictures in its news, the great amount of publicized agents and the great amount of human pictures suggest that the region's events are important (worthy of being reported on extensively and being highlighted by pictures) and the region's agents are important (worthy of being publicized and pictured). Thus, the category of importance falls under four subcategories: 1) high/low newsworthiness; 2) visibility/invisibility; 3) the agents' publicity/anonymity; and 4) the agents' personification/impersonality. The first two categories represent the idea of general importance of a region, whereas the last two refer to the importance of a region's agents.

Another projected characteristic of the centre/periphery, as follows from Avraham's study, is positivity/negativity (Avraham, 2006). In media, the centre is presented as a

good place to live in. It is characterized by a flourishing economy, a high level of safety, a developed social infrastructure and offers vast opportunities to satisfy one's intellectual and cultural demands. The periphery, conversely, is portrayed as a bad place to live in. The periphery is often characterized by a high unemployment and crime rates, poor social infrastructure and limited access to education and culture. In order to capture whether a region's representation is positive/negative and in what particular ways, the category of positivity/negativity is introduced. This category is inherent in the news topics referred to in the news on the regions. Inferences about the regions' positivity/negativity will be based on the ratio of "good" vs. "bad" news.

Since importance/unimportance and positivity/negativity are the definitive characteristics of the centre-periphery, the categories bearing on these ideas, - high/low newsworthiness, visibility/invisibility, the agents' publicity/anonymity, the agents' personification/impersonality and positivity/negativity are considered in this study as primary, i.e. directly related to the centre-periphery concept. Inferences based on these categories are of the primary importance.

Furthermore, the centre-periphery dichotomy can be understood as the dichotomy of urban vs. rural places. The urban and the rural, in their turn, represent the opposition of the traditional society, the modern society and the post-modern society. The source of the material and spiritual development in the contemporary world is the city, especially the big city, rather than the rural place. The city makes history and dictates "the rules of the game" to the rural place. Thus, another centre-periphery category that will be employed in this study is urbanity-rurality. Inferences about how urban or rural a region is presented will be made on the basis of the ratio of news on urban places vs. news on rural places.

Since urbanity/rurality is another dimension of the centre-periphery dichotomy, the corresponding category of urbanity/rurality is considered in this study as secondary.

More details about the centre-periphery categories that have been overviewed above are provided below.

2.2.1. Importance through the total amount of news: high/low newsworthiness

The process of drawing the centre-periphery inferences about a region starts with the exploration of the ratio of a region's news in the total amount of news. Important (=central) places tend to be covered extensively, whereas unimportant (=peripheral) places tend to appear in the news infrequently. The comparison of the region's ratio in the total amount of news would give one an idea of the relative importance/unimportance of a region which will help identify the centres and peripheries.

2.2.2. Importance through the amount of pictures: visibility/invisibility

The centre-periphery inferences about a region can also be made by looking at how often its news are accompanied by pictures. The underlying idea is that important news tend to be accompanied by pictures, whereas unimportant news are not. However, one should keep in mind that the presence/absence of a picture next to the news text does not always depend on how (un)important the referred-to event is deemed by newsmakers: there could be some material constraints involved. Yet, if one adopts the reader's perspective, the question of material constraint is not so relevant, since the reader is unaware of them. Thus, the presence/absence of pictures in the news can still be considered as indicators of the 'centre' and the 'periphery', especially from the reader's perspective. A higher ratio of the pictureless news coming from a certain place might suggest that the issues and the people associated with that place are not important enough to be visualized, i.e. they are peripheral. On the contrary, a higher ratio of pictures in the news on a place might lead the reader to perceive those news, and therefore, the place itself, as important, i.e. central.

2.2.3. Importance of agents through publicized agents: the agents' publicity/anonymity

The formulation "a region's characteristic" is used repeatedly in this study. However, it should be noted, that a region is a collective term for the people who represent that

region. Therefore, a region's importance can be equated with the importance of a region's agents. In this study, the agent is an individual or a group of individuals who are referred to in the news text or who appear in the picture.

Inferences about how (un)important an agent is, can be made by exploring some discursive features of the news text. Important agents tend to be publicized by referring to them specifically by names and/or titles, whereas unimportant ones are left anonymous and referred to generally without names and titles. The general address form has two varieties: a) a group as the agent; and b) an organization as the agent. The specific address form has two varieties as well: a) a representative of an organization as the agent; and b) a personality as the agent. Examples of the specific and the general ways of referring to the agent are given in Table 1:

Table 1: Anonymous and publicized agents

form of the agent's address	**original text of the title**	**gloss**	**English translation**
1. general forms of the agent's address: anonymous agents			
1a. group	Наркополицейские Кабардино-Балкарии задержали группу наркоторговцев. (РИА Новости, 01.02.2007)	*Narkopolitseiskie Kabardino-balkarii zaderzhali gruppu narkotorgovtsev. (RIA Novosti, 01.02.2007)*	'Illegal Drugs police officers of Kabardino-Balkariia detained a group of drug dealers'. (RIA Novosti, 01.02.2007)
1b. organization	Росгидромет предупреждает о лавинной опасности на Северном Кавказе. (РИА Новости, 02.02.2007)	*Rosgidromet preduprezhdaet o lavinnoi opasnosti na Severnom Kavkaze. (RIA Novosti, 02.02.2007)*	'Russian Weather Service warns about the risk of avalanche in Northern Caucasia'. (RIA Novosti, 02.02.2007)
2. specific forms of the agent's address: publicized agents			

2a. representative of an organization	Муфтий Ингушетии и его сын ранены при нападении неизвестных. (РИА Новости, 01.02.2007)	*Muftii Ingushetii i ego syn raneny pri napadenii neizvestnykh. (RIA Novosti, 01.02.2007)*	'Mufti of Ingushetiia and his son were wounded in the attacked by strangers'. (RIA Novosti, 01.02.2007)
2b. personality	Кадыров признает проблему дефицита рабочих мест в Чечне. (РИА Новости, 01.02.2007)	*Kadyrov priznaet problemu defitsita rabochikh mest v Chechne. (RIA Novosti, 01.02.2007)*	'Kadyrov recognizes the problem of shortage of jobs in Chechnya'. (RIA Novosti, 01.02.2007)

A higher ratio of the agents that are referred to specifically (i.e. publicized agents) and a lower ratio of the agents that are addressed generally (i.e. anonymous agents) would suggest that a region has a higher ratio of important agents and a lower ratio of unimportant ones: this is a centre feature. Conversely, a region would appear as peripheral if its coverage exhibits a higher ratio of the generally referred-to agents (=unimportant agents) and a lower ratio of the specified agents (=important agents) since this suggests that there is an abundance of unimportant agents and a lack of important ones.

2.2.4. Importance through the pictured agents: the agents' personification/impersonality

As was pointed out in the previous subsection, the term "region" is a metonymic designation of the people who live in a region. Therefore, the formulation "a region's importance" follows from the importance of people who come from that region. Since centrality is defined through importance, the importance of a region's agents can be considered as one of the characteristics of a region's centrality. It should be noted that the importance of an agent is a subjective category that can be understood differently depending on a perspective. In media, anything and anybody can be positioned as important. In the news, important people, or, to be more accurate, people deemed to be

important, are easily identifiable. First, they are mentioned by names: this type of importance is captured in this study through the category of the agent's publicity/anonymity. Second, news about important people are often accompanied by their pictures. The more pictures per particular personality there are in the news, the more important that personality is. It is quite predictable that the personalities who are most often pictured in the news are the country's political leaders, prominent representatives of (popular) culture, sportsmen, etc, i.e. celebrities. From this perspective, the regions' degrees of importance (=centrality) could be assessed by the number of personalities that are pictured most often. However, this method has flaws, if used by itself. The problem is that when a news edition provides a picture of a celebrity, it does not necessarily indicates that the edition deems that person as important. When reporting on celebrities, news makers have little choice regarding whether to provide a picture or not. Since the public has a guaranteed interest in celebrities, news makers will strive to provide their pictures since this would help sell the edition. An extra stimulus that leads to the presence of celebrities' pictures in the news is the availability and abundance of their images. Thus, the presence of a celebrity's pictures is associated with the reception and production factors, rather than with the news makers' choice. As opposite to celebrities' images, pictures of ordinary people are indicative of the editorial choice: the decision to provide a picture suggests that this person is deemed important by the news makers since they took an effort to obtain a picture and "sacrificed" space for that picture. Yet, it would not be wise to ignore the pictures of celebrities in making inferences on the "concentration" of important people in a region. The solution is to take in account both celebrity and ordinary people pictures. Since the study aims to obtain only major trends in the regions' representation, the researcher opted for quantifying these two types of human images in bulk by using the category of the human image which is the combination of celebrity images and ordinary people images. (Yet, the distinction between celebrity images and ordinary people images can be explored in subsequent studies of the regions' representation in the news).

While important agents (regardless of whether they are defined as celebrities or ordinary people who are deemed important) tend to be pictured, i.e. represented by human images, unimportant ones are "faceless", i.e. either pictureless or represented by a

non-human image. The higher the ratio of human images is in the region's coverage, the higher the ratio of "important" agents is and the more important the region appears.

Importance of a region (including its events and agents) is only one of the facets of the region's centrality/peripherality. It is also worthwhile to know if a region's projected importance is positive or negative. For instance, a region may enjoy a very extensive coverage which can appear as a centre feature. But what if the region's news mostly refer to crimes? This is why the centre-periphery inferences bearing on the ideas of importance/unimportance should be weighed against the ideas of positivity/negativity.

2.2.5. Positivity vs. negativity through the news topics

A glimpse into how positive/negative a region's reality appears to be in the news is provided by the exploration of the region's news topics. The various topics, or the subsections in which news stories appear are used by news makers to classify a multitude of news stories by the domain of reality to which they refer. By looking at the distribution of a region's news stories by topics, one can draw some inferences about what domains of reality are most topical for a region. For instance, a high ratio of news on accidents in a region's coverage may suggest to the reader that the region is hazardous. Thus, the exploration of how various topics are distributed in a region's news would help discern a region's projected characteristics.

Let us consider the inventory of the topic classifiers used by RIA Novosti. The list of the topics employed by RIA Novosti is limited to seven: 'society', 'accidents', 'economics', 'politics', 'power structures', 'culture' and 'science and technology'.[16] Each of these news topics focuses on a certain domain of reality.

'Accidents' news inform on hazards to life and well-being, both for individuals and for society at large (e.g. a crime, a car accident, a snow storm, etc). 'Power structures' news refer to the activities of the Ministries of Defense, Rescue, Home Affairs and Justice, as well as their subdivisions that appear in the news in connection with emergency situations, court trials, military operations, etc. This news topic often overlaps with 'accidents'. For instance, the very first news story on a crime that has just happened

[16] These are literal translations of the RIA Novosti original headings for the news topics.

would be placed under the topic 'accidents'. If the news makers choose to report on the development of the incident (e.g. at the stage of investigation and trial), the news story is placed under the topic 'power structures' since now it is the domain of police and court. Thus, the content of the 'accidents' and 'power structures' news is negative.

'Society' news provide information pertaining to education, health care, welfare, housing, public transportation, and the weather, that is issues comprising people's daily life. 'Economics' news cover economic activities of large state companies and of places as administrative entities. 'Politics' news mostly inform on events involving officials of regional governments and city councils. 'Culture' news mostly discuss "high culture" events, such as performances, exhibitions, competitions, conferences and festivals in the spheres of theatre, cinema, ballet, literature, etc. 'Science and technology' informs on the activities of research institutions.

It should be noted that in RIA Novosti, there is a clear demarcation line between 'accidents' and 'power structures' on the one hand and the remaining topics, on the other hand. The differing purposes of these two types of classifiers can be illustrated by the following example: Во Владивостоке за ночь выпало более двух месячных норм осадков, *Vo Vladivostoke za noch' vypalo bole dvukh mesiachnykh norm osadkov 'Over two monthly norms of precipitation fell on Vladivostok in one night'* (RIA Novosti, 05.03.2007). One could expect this news story to be placed in 'society' news since it refers to the weather. However, it is actually found in the 'accidents' section since the events described in the news story illustrate the negative effect of the weather on people's daily life. The careful exploration of *RIA Novosti* news revealed the following: for a news story to be placed in the sections 'society', 'economics', 'politics', 'culture' and 'science and technology', the content of a news story should not be negative. If the content is negative, the news story is placed under 'accidents' or 'power structures'.

On the basis of this principle used by RIA Novosti news makers, the information provided under the subject headings 'society', 'economics', 'politics', 'culture' and 'science and technology' can be described as "good news", whereas the news appearing in the subsections 'accidents' and 'power structures' can be referred to as "bad news".

Table 2 below contains the typical examples of the news content that is placed in the subsections 'society', 'accidents', 'economics', 'politics', 'power structures', 'culture' and 'science and technology':

Table 2: RIA Novosti news topics

news topic	typical content	example		
politics	politicians and political activities: a) state administration officials of all levels (federal, regional; municipal, local) b) party leaders; c) political movement leaders. * Typically the topics of news under 'politics' are political events, such as press conferences, official visits, elections and the like.	Премьер-министр РФ проведет во Владивостоке совещание по вопросам развития Дальнего Востока. (РИА Новости, 01.03.07)	*Prem'er-ministr RF provedet vo Vladivistoke soveshchanie po voprosam razvitiia Da'lnego Vostoka. (RIA Novosti, 01.03.07)*	'RF Prime-Minister will conduct a meeting on the development of the country's Far East'. (RIA Novosti, 01.03.07)
economics	economics-related issues of larger scope such as : a) a region's economic functioning; b) relations between the federal centre and	Ситуацию в агропромышленном комплексе Камчатки оценит комиссия Минсельхоза. (РИА Новости, 31.03.2007)	*Situatsiiu v agropromyshlennom komplekse Kamchatki oit komissiia Minsel'khoza. (RIA Novosti, 31.03.2007)*	'The situation in Chukotka's agro-industrial complex will be evaluated by the Ministry of Farming'. (RIA Novosti, 31.03.2007)

	a regions.			
power structures	state power institutions, such as the armed forces, the militsiia, the prosecutor's office, the rescue service, the customs. Typically the news items under the 'power structures' inform on: a) routine activities and work achievements of the above 'power structures'; b) statistical data shared by the power structures; c) evaluations, opinions expressed by officials of the 'power structures'	Генпрокурор РФ встревожен сложившейся на Дальнем Востоке криминальной ситуацией. (РИА Новости, 05.02.2007)	*Genprokuror RF vtrevozhen slozhivsheisia na Dal'nem Vostoke kriminal'noi situatsiei. (RIA Novosti, 05.02.2007)*	'RF Prosecutor General is concerned about the present crime situation in the Far East'. (RIA Novosti, 05.02.2007)
culture	cultural issues, such as cinema, theatre, music, fine arts, languages, heritage culture.	Участие в международном кинофестивале во Владивостоке подтвердили уже 12 стран АТР. (РИА Новости, 02.02.2007)	*Uchastie v mezhdunarodnom kinofestivale vo Vladivostoke podtverdili uzhe 12 stran ATR. (RIA Novosti, 02.02.2007)*	'12 countries have already confirmed their participation in Vladivostok cinema festival'. (RIA Novosti, 02.02.2007)

The topics aspect of the news on the regions will be approached in the following way. The first stage of the analysis is to compare the regions with regard to the balance of "good" vs. "bad" news. This would help identify whether a region is associated with positivity/negativity as a projected characteristic. In particular, a higher ratio of "good" news and a low ratio of "bad" news would characterize a region as positive. Conversely, a lower ratio of "good" news and a high ratio of "bad" news would characterize a region as negative.

The second stage of the analysis is to identify the particular topics that ensure a region's positivity/negativity. For instance, if a region's stands out with a higher ratio of "good" news, it is important to find out which of the topics ('society', 'economics', 'politics', 'culture' and 'science and technology', or a combination of these) ensure this outstanding ratio.

Higher/lower ratios of individual topics can be interpreted in light of certain ideas. Associations between the ratio of the news topics and the region's projected characteristics are explicated in Table 3 below:

Table 3: The higher/lower ratios of the news topics and the associated centre-periphery characteristics

news topic	higher ratio	lower ratio
'society'	people-oriented	people-neglecting
'economics'	economically active	economically inert
'politics'	politically active	politically inert
'culture'	civilized	uncivilized
'science and technology'	scientifically active	scientifically inert
'accidents'	hazardous	safe
'power structures'	hazardous	safe

A higher ratio of 'society' news projects the idea people-orientedness since first, this type of news orient to people's daily life (covering such areas as the weather, transportation, health care, welfare, etc) and second, the content of such news in always positive in RIA Novosti. Negative events pertaining to social issues (such as a road accident, a snow storm, a decease outbreak, etc) are placed under 'accidents' or 'power

structures'. In the context of RIA Novosti news, a higher ratio of 'society' news communicates the idea that people's needs are taken care of. Conversely, a lower ratio of such news projects the idea that people's needs are neglected, hence the category of people-neglect.

The same logic can be applied to explain how a higher/lower ratio of 'economics', 'politics', 'culture' and 'science and technology' translate into the ideas of economic activeness/inertness, political activeness/inertness, civilization/lack of civilization, and scientific activeness/inertness, respectively. One can make a direct link between a higher ratio of a news topic and the corresponding positive characteristic (i.e. "more is better" and "less is worse") because each of the aforementioned topics excludes negative events.

Since 'accidents' and 'power structure' belong to "bad" news, a higher ratio of news under this classifier is a negative characteristic, while a lower ratio is a positive one. Since 'accidents' news report on various types of hazards, a higher ratio of such news 'accidents' translates into hazardness, while a lower ratio projects safety. The ratio of 'power structures' news correspond to the same projected characteristics as 'accidents' since there is no principal differences between the content of these two news topics.

People-orientedness, economic activeness, political activeness, culturedness, scientific activeness and safety are centre features; people-neglect, economic inertness, political inertness, unculturedness, scientific inertness and hazardness are periphery features. A region's association with a centre feature would characterize it as central. Conversely, a region's association with a periphery feature would communicate "peripherality" to it.

Apart from the primary centre-periphery categories of importance/unimportance and positivity/negativity, the study employs the secondary centre-periphery category of urbanity vs. rurality.

2.2.6. Urbanity vs. rurality

The places covered in the news on Russia's region can be divided into urban and rural. Urban places are bigger and smaller cities. Rural places are towns and villages. While RIA Novosti news on all regions focus on cities, in some regions, the coverage gap

between urban and rural places is more noticeable. The comparison of the regions' ratio of urban and rural news allows for making inferential distinctions between more urban (=less rural) and less urban (=more rural) regions. Urbanity can be considered as a centre feature since it overlaps with the concept of the centre through the ideas of modernity and civilization. Rurality is a periphery characteristic: it is related to the concept of the periphery through the ideas of backwardness and traditionality.

Urbanity/rurality is neither a definitive, nor a descriptive characteristic of the centre-periphery. Rather, it is another dimension of the centre-periphery dichotomy. For this reason, urbanity/rurality is considered in this study as a secondary centre-periphery indicator: the centre-periphery inferences based on the projected urbanity/rurality would only complement the inferences based on the primary categories.

A summary of the centre-periphery categories designed for this study is provided in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Centre-periphery categories

the centre-periphery category	**corresponding news feature**	**relevance to the centre-periphery concept**
1. high/low newsworthiness	the ratio of a region's news in the total amount of news	primary
2. visibility/invisibility	the ratio of the pictured vs. pictureless news in a region's coverage	primary
3. the agents' publicity/anonymity	the ratio of the publicized vs. anonymous agents in a region's news	primary
4. the agents' personification/impersonality	the ratio of human vs. non-human pictures in a region's news	primary
5. positivity/negativity:	the ratio of "good" vs. "bad" news in a region's coverage	primary
5a. people-orientedness/people neglect	the ratio of society news in a region's coverage	primary

5b. economic activeness/inertness	the ratio of economics news in a region's coverage	primary
5c. political activeness/inertness	the ratio of politics news in a region's coverage	primary
5d. scientific activeness/intertness	the ratio of science news in a region's coverage	primary
5e. culturedness/unculturedness,	the ratio of culture news in a region's coverage	primary
5f. hazardness/safety	the ratio of 'accidents' and 'power structures' news in a region's coverage	primary
6. urbanity/rurality	the ratio of urban vs. rural news in a region's coverage	secondary

Now that the centre-periphery categories employed in this study have been outlined, it is necessary to explain how inferences about a region's centrality/peripherality will be made. The regions' news will be coded for the occurrences of the features that are associated with the centre-periphery categories (e.g., the occurrences of the social news in the total amount of news on a region which correspond to the subcategory of people-orientedness). Then the regions will be compared to one another with regard to the ratio of the feature in order to identify the outstanding regions, i.e. the regions whose ratios of the feature are significantly above/below the average. Each feature projects a certain idea that is related to the centre-periphery concept. For instance, social news projects the idea of people-orientedness. A higher ratio of 'society' news is considered to be a positive correlation with the idea of people-orientedness, a lower ratio of the feature is a negative correlation with this idea and the negation of people-orientedness, i.e. people-neglect. People-orientedness is a central characteristic that adds to a region's centrality. People-neglect is a peripheral characteristic that aggravates a region's peripherality. In order to determine whether a region is represented as central or peripheral, one needs to analyze all of its positive and negative correlations with the centre-periphery ideas. The final stage of the analysis is to differentiate between the stronger/weaker centres and peripheries.

CHAPTER 3: ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

This chapter of the thesis presents the results of exploring the regions' coverage in the light of the following centre-periphery categories: 1) high/low newsworthiness; 2) visibility/invisibility; 3) publicity/anonymity; 4) positivity/negativity; and 5) urbanity/rurality. These results will be used to make the centre-periphery inferences about Russia's regions and to differentiate between stronger/weaker centres/peripheries among Russia's regions.

The exploration of a region's news focuses on concrete and quantifiable features of a region's coverage (e.g., the ratio of 'accidents' in a region's news) and is guided by the following questions: 1) what is a region's ratio in the total amount of news; 2) what is the ratio of pictured news in a region's coverage; 3) what are the ratio of the various news topics in a region's coverage; 4) what are the ratios of publicized vs. anonymous agents in a region's coverage; 5) what is the ratio of human images in a region's news; and 6) what are the ratios of urban vs. rural news in a region's coverage.

3.1. Importance through the amount of news on a region

A region's ratio in the total amount of news is the most immediate indicator of a region's importance/unimportance (=centrality/peripherality). Clearly, an important (=central) place would be covered extensively, whereas an unimportant (=peripheral) place would not appear in the news frequently. If all seven regions were equal to one another with regard to the extensiveness of coverage, each region would be expected to account for one seventh of the total amount of news (3635/7=519). The difference between a region's observed and expected amount of news can be used to make the centre-periphery inferences. A region whose observed amount of news exceeds the expected amount can be characterized as a centre. Conversely, a negative difference between the expected and the observed amount of news would characterize a region as a periphery. Let us consider Table 5:

Table 5: Regions' ratios in the total amount of news

region	observed amount of news, n	expected amount of news, n	difference between the observed and the expected amount of news, n	difference between the observed and the expected amount of news, %
Centre	853	519	+334	**+64**
Far East	574	519	+55	+11
North-West	490	519	-29	-6
Siberia	464	519	-55	-11
South	490	519	-29	-6
Urals	402	519	-117	-23
Volga	362	519	-157	**-30**

* bold highlights indicate outstanding results

As Table 5 above shows, the regions differ considerably in how far their observed amount of news deviates from the expected. The centres are the Central Region and the Far East. The former is a "strong" centre and the latter is a "weak" one. The Centre's observed amount of news exceeds the expected by 334 (+334; +64%). The Far East's difference between the observed and the expected number of news is less pronounced (+55; +11%). The remaining regions (the North-West, Siberia, the South, the Urals and the Volga) appear as peripheries: their observed amount of news falls behind the expected. The "strongest" periphery is the Volga: its observed amount of news is short of expected by 30 % (-154; -30%).

Thus, with regard to the amount of news on the regions, the Central Region can be characterized as the most important (=central) whereas the Volga can be characterized as the least important (=peripheral).

3.2. Importance through the amount of pictures in a region's news: visibility/invisibility

The ratio of pictured vs. pictureless news is another indicator of a region's importance/unimportance (=centrality/peripherality). This indicator is warranted by the idea that important news tend to be accompanied by pictures, whereas unimportant news are not. A region that is a prolific source of important news is important, a region that is not home to important news is not important.

Table 6 below presents the regions' results on the presence/absence of pictures in their news:

Table 6: Presence/absence of pictures in the news on Russia's regions

category	Centre		Far East		North-West		Siberia		South		Urals		Volga	
visibility/ invisibility	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
picture present	256	30	238	41	231	47	245	53	222	45	200	50	189	52
picture absent	597	**70**	336	**59**	259	53	219	47	268	55	202	50	173	48
total	853	100	574	100	490	100	464	100	490	100	402	100	362	100

* bold highlights indicate outstanding results

As can be seen from Table 6, the regions are similar to each other with regard to the presence/absence of pictures in the news: there is a tendency to the equilibrium between the pictured and "the pictureless" news. There are only two regions that deviate from this tendency: the Centre (to a greater extent) and the Far East (to a smaller extent). In the Centre there is a notable predominance of the pictureless news (597/853; 70 %) over the pictured (256/853; 30 %). In the Far East the gap between the pictureless news (336/574; 59 %) and the pictured news (238/574; 41 %) is less pronounced.

The significance of the aforementioned descriptive statistical results was tested with the help of a chi-square analysis. Chi-square is a statistical test comparing observed data with expected data under the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis states that the observed differences between two (or more) groups are due to chance. The chi-square is the sum of the squared difference between observed and expected values for each variable divided by the expected value of that variable. The significance of the resulting chi-square (represented by a p-value) is assessed with the help of a special table listing the minimal values that a chi-square "must" reach in order to be interpreted as significant. In social sciences the minimal significance is represented by a p-value of 0.05 or less.

The chi-square test of pictured vs. 'pictureless" news in the coverage of Russia's regions detects a significant difference between the regions in this respect: $\chi^2 = 101$, $p<0.001$. The results of the chi-square test are presented in Table 7 below:

Table 7: Chi-square test of the regions' pictured vs. pictureless news

category	Centre			Far East			North-West			Siberia			South			The Urals			Volga			χ^2
visibility/ invisibility	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	
picture present	371	256	**36**	250	238	1	213	231	2	202	245	**9**	213	222	0	175	200	4	157	189	**6**	
picture absent	482	597	[illegible]	324	336	0	277	259	1	262	219	7	277	268	0	227	202	3	205	173	5	
total con			**63**			1			3			**16**			0			6			**11**	
χ^2																						101

exp – expected value; obs – observed value; con – the contribution to the chi-square: $con = (obs - exp)^2/exp$;

total con per region – the region's total contribution to the chi-square, χ^2 – chi-square;

bold highlights show outstanding results

* the numerical data in the table were rounded to whole numbers

As Table 7 shows, not all regions contribute to the chi-square equally. In particular, the bulk of the difference is accounted for by the Centre (con total per region=63). Apart from the Centre, moderate contributions to the chi-square are made by Siberia (con total per region=16) and the Volga (con total per region=11). The remaining regions (the Far East, the North-West, the South and the Urals) are minor contributors to the chi-square.

Let us consider the results of the outstanding regions, - the Centre, Siberia and the Volga, - in greater detail. Most of the Centre's contribution to the chi-square is made up by news with pictures (con=36). The observed amount of pictured news (obs=256) is lower that the expected (exp=371).

The contribution of Siberia to the difference is mostly accounted for by pictured news, too (con=9). But as contrary to the Centre, their observed amount (obs=245) is greater than the expected (exp=202).

The Volga's contribution to the difference is made up by pictured news (con=6). As in Siberia, the observed amount of pictured news (obs=189) in this region exceeds the expected (exp=157).

With regard to pictured vs. pictureless news in the regions' coverage, the "centres are Siberia and the Volga, and the periphery is the Central region. Siberia and the Volga exhibited the highest ratio of pictured news which infers that the news on these regions are important. The Centre's ratio of pictured news is the smallest among the regions: this leads to the inference that the Centre's news are the least important.

3.3. Importance through the agents of the news story: publicity/anonymity

A region is originally a purely geographic concept. However, places do not exist separately from people, and people do not exist separately from places. People are often judged by the place they come from. Accordingly, places adopt the characteristics of the people who live there (e.g., a "poor neighborhood" = a neighborhood inhabited by poor people). This is why an "important" region is a region that is home to important agents. Inferences about how important (=central) or unimportant (=peripheral) a region is, can be based on how the region's agents are referred to in the news. Important agents tend to be referred to specifically by names and/or titles, unimportant ones are referred to

generally without names and titles. For convenience, the specific designations of the agents are referred to as publicized agents, whereas the general designations of the agents are referred to as anonymous agents.

The results on the agent address forms are presented in Table 8:

Table 8: Anonymous and publicized agents in the news on Russia's regions

category	Centre		Far East		North-West		Siberia		South		Urals		Volga	
publicity/ anonymity	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
anonymous	507	**74**	332	66	322	67	309	65	309	**61**	239	70	226	71
publicized	176	**26**	170	34	158	33	166	35	198	**39**	101	30	93	29
total	683	100	502	100	480	100	475	100	507	100	340	100	319	100

* bold highlights indicate outstanding results

As the bold highlights Table 8 show, there is a predominance of anonymous agents over publicized ones in the news on each region. Anonymous agents appear in 61-74 % of the news stories: the Centre – 74 %, the Far East – 66 %, the North-West – 67 %, Siberia – 65 %, the South – 61 %, the Urals – 70 %, the Volga – 71 %. Publicized agents are found in 26-39 % of the regions' news: the Centre – 26 %, the Far East – 34 %, the North-West – 33 %, Siberia – 35 %, the South – 39 %, the Urals – 30 %, the Volga – 29%. Thus, all regions are similar to each other: in their news, agents are mostly referred anonymously. However, the Centre and the South, albeit moderately, stand out from other regions. The Centre is noted for the greatest ratio of anonymous agents (507/683; 74%) and the smallest ratio of publicized ones (176/683; 26 %), as compared to other regions. The South exhibits the smallest amount of anonymous agents (309/507; 61%) and the greatest amount of publicized ones (198/507; 39%). The significance of these descriptive results was tested with the help of a chi-square analysis. Its results are presented in Table 9 on below:

Table 9: Chi-square test of the anonymous vs. publicized agents in the news on Russia's regions

category	Centre			Far East			North-West			Siberia			South			The Urals			Volga			χ^2
publicity/ anonymity	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	
unnamed	464	507	4	341	332	0.2	326	322	0	322	309	1	344	309	3	231	239	0	217	226	0	
named	219	176	**9**	161	170	0.5	154	158	0	153	166	1	163	198	**8**	109	101	1	102	93	1	
total con			**13**			1			0			2			**11**			1			1	
χ^2																						29

exp – expected value; obs – observed value; con – the contribution to the chi-square: $con = (obs - exp)^2/exp$;

total con per region – the region's total contribution to the chi-square, χ^2 – chi-square;

bold highlights show outstanding results

* the numerical data in the table were rounded to whole numbers

The chi-square test shows that the differences between the regions with regard to anonymous vs. publicized agents are significant (χ^2=29, p<0.01). Most of the chi-square is accounted for by the Centre (con total per region=13) and the South (con total per region=11). The contributions of the remaining regions, the Far East, the North-West, Siberia, the Urals and the Volga, are very small.

The contributions of the outstanding regions to the difference are made up mostly by publicized agents: con=9 (the Centre) and con=8 (the South).

In the Centre, the observed amount of publicized agents (obs=176) is smaller than the expected (exp=219). In the news on the South, as opposite to the Centre, such agents occur more often (obs=198) than expected (exp=163).

The exploration of anonymous vs. publicized agents in the news on Russia's regions yields the following results. The Centre exhibits the weakest association with uniqueness, as compared to other regions. The South, on the contrary, shows the strongest association with this feature. Thus, the Central region appears to be the periphery, and the South appears to be the centre.

With regard to the publicized agents vs. anonymous agents in the regions' coverage, the centre is the South and the periphery is the Central region. The South displays the highest ratio of publicized agents which suggests that the region's agents are important. The Centre's ratio of publicized agents is the smallest among the regions: this characterizes the Centre's agents as the least important.

3.4. Importance through pictured agents: personification/impersonality

The visual aspect of the news has a complex relationship with the text. In particular, a picture can highlight the contents of the text, or provide what is missing in it, or both. Inferences about whether or not a region is home to important agents, i.e. whether or not a region is important, can be based on how many pictured agents are present in the region's news. With regard to the visual aspect of the news, important agents are those represented by human images. In other words, a human image next to the news text

signals that the agent of the event is important. A non-human images or the absence of any image communicates the idea that the agent is not important enough to be pictured.

Let us consider Table 10 that shows the distribution of human vs. non-human images in the regions' news:

Table 10: Human and non-human images in the news on Russia's regions

category	Centre		Far East		North-West		Siberia		South		Urals		Volga	
personification/ impersonality	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
non-human	153	57	159	61	141	57	143	53	137	59	104	**49**	126	**64**
human	114	43	101	39	105	43	128	47	97	41	110	**51**	71	**36**
total	267	100	260	100	246	100	271	100	234	100	214	100	197	100

*bold highlights indicate outstanding results

As can be seen from Table 10, in all regions, except the Urals, non-human pictures moderately outnumber the human ones. The shares of the news with the non-human pictures range from 59 % to 64 %: the Centre – 57 %, the Far East – 61 %, the North-West – 57 %, Siberia – 53 %, the South – 59 %, the Volga – 64 %. The ratios of the news with 'people' pictures are between 36 % and 47 % in most regions: the Centre – 43 %, the Far East – 39 %, the North-West – 43 %, Siberia – 47 %, the South – 41 %, the Volga – 36 %. The highest ratio of non-human pictures (126/197; 64 %) and the lowest ratio of human pictures (71/197; 36 %) are found in the news on the Volga. The Urals exhibit a trend that is different from the rest of the regions: in its news, 'people' pictures (110/214; 51%) outnumber other picture types (10/214; 49%), though very modestly. These observations were verified through a chi-square test. Its results are presented in Table 11 below:

Table 11: Chi-square test of human vs. non-human images in the news on Russia's regions

category	Centre			Far East			North-West			Siberia			South			The Urals			Volga			χ^2
personification/ impersonality	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	
non-human	152	153	0	148	159	1	140	141	0	155	143	1	133	137	0	122	104	**3**	112	126	**2**	
human	115	114	0	112	101	1	106	105	0	116	128	1	101	97	0	92	110	**4**	85	71	**2**	
total con			0			2			0			2			0			**7**			**4**	
χ^2																						14

exp – expected value; obs – observed value; con – the contribution to the chi-square: $con = (obs - exp)^2/exp$;

total con per region – the region's total contribution to the chi-square, χ^2 – chi-square;

bold highlights show outstanding results

* the numerical data in the table were rounded to whole numbers

The chi-square test detects a significant difference among the regions with regard to non-human vs. human pictures: $\chi^2 = 14$, $p<0.05$ (see Table 11). Most regions' contributions to the difference (the Centre, the Far East, the North-West, Siberia and the South) are either very small or zero. The chi-square is mostly accounted for by only two regions, the Urals (con total per region=7) and the Volga (con total per region=4). The Urals's contribution to the chi-square is almost equally represented 'people' pictures (con=4) and other pictures types (con=3). The observed amount of human images (obs=110) is greater than the expected (exp=92). Other picture types accompany the Urals news less often (obs=104) than expected (exp=122). The contribution of the Volga is, also, equally accounted by human and non-human pictures. As opposite to the Urals, in the Volga news, people are pictured less often (obs=71) than expected (exp=85), and non-human pictures appear more often (obs=126) than expected (exp=112).

Thus, the exploration of the picture types in the news on Russia's regions lead to the following results. The Volga stands out from other regions with a smaller ratio of human pictures. The Volga's smaller ratio of human images in the news characterizes the region's agents as less important in comparison to other regions. Thus, the Volga can be characterized as the periphery. In the Urals' news, human pictures slightly outnumber non-human ones which suggests the idea that this region's agents are more important in comparison to other regions. Thus, the Urals appears to be the centre.

With regard to the human vs. non-human images in the news on Russia's regions, the centre is the Urals region and the periphery is the Volga region. The Urals's news exhibit the highest ratio of human images which suggests that the region's agents are important. The Volga's ratio of human images is the smallest among the regions: this characterizes the Volga's agents as the least important.

3.5. Positivity vs. negativity through the news topics

The centre-periphery inferences about a regions can draw on the type of issues (i.e. news topics) covered in the regions' news. Some of RIA Novosti news topics tend to refer to positive events, others cover mostly negative events. (For the justification of the

distinction between positive and negative news, see subsection 2.2.5). For instance, RIA Novosti 'society' news report on social policy and community life, whereas 'accidents' news cover crimes, road accidents, natural disasters, etc. The high ratio of good news and the low ratio of bad news project a high incidence of positive events and a low incidence of negative events. The more positive events and the fewer negative events there are in the region, the more positive (=central) it appears, and vice versa.

Let us consider the regions' results on "good" vs. "bad" news presented in Table 12:

Table 12: "Good" and "bad" news in the coverage of Russia's regions

category	**Centre**		**Far East**		**North-West**		**Siberia**		**South**		**Urals**		**Volga**	
positivity-negativity	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
"bad" news	274	32	179	32	219	46	255	**56**	290	**59**	165	41	136	38
"good" news	574	**68**	387	**68**	261	54	204	44	198	41	234	59	226	62
total	848	100	566	100	480	100	459	100	488	100	399	100	362	100

*bold highlights indicate outstanding results

As Table 12 show, in most regions, the Centre, the Far East, the North-West, the Urals and the Volga, the ratios of "good" news exceed the ratios of "bad" news: the Centre – 574/848; 68 %; the Far East – 387/566; 68%; the North-West – 261/480; 54%; the Urals – 234/399; 59 %; the Volga – 226/362; 62 %. The prevalence of "good" news is especially salient in the Centre (574/848; 68 %) and the Far East (387/566; 68%). In two regions, Siberia (255/459; 56 %) and the South (290/488; 59 %), there is a predominance of "bad" news over "good" news, in contrast to other regions. These observations need to be verified through a chi-square test. Its results are presented in Table 13 below:

Table 13: Chi-square test of the "good" vs. "bad" news in the coverage of Russia's regions

category	Centre			Far East			North-West			Siberia			South			The Urals			Volga			χ^2
positivity-negativity	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	
"bad" news	357	274	**19**	239	179	**15**	202	219	1	193	255	**20**	206	290	**35**	168	165	0	153	136	2	
"good" news	491	574	**14**	327	387	**11**	278	261	1	266	204	**14**	282	198	**25**	231	234	0	209	226	1	
total con			**34**			**26**			2			**34**			**60**			0			3	
χ^2																						159

exp – expected value; obs – observed value; con – the contribution to the chi-square: $con = (obs - exp)^2/exp$;

total con per region – the region's total contribution to the chi-square, χ^2 – chi-square;

bold highlights show outstanding results

* the numerical data in the table were rounded to whole numbers

The chi-square test shows that there is a significant difference between the regions with regard to the ratios of "good" news to "bad" news (χ^2=159, p<0.001).

It is visible that the regions' participation in the chi-square varies: some regions contribute to the difference more than others. In particular, the South's share in the chi-square is the greatest among the regions (con total per region=60). The shares of the Centre (con total per region=34), Siberia (con total per region=34) and the Far East (con total per region=26) are notable, too. The contributions of the North-West (con total per region=2), the Urals (con total per region=0) and the Volga (con total per region=3) are either extremely small or zero.

As the bold highlights in Table 13 indicate, the results of the outstanding regions are mostly ensured by the outstanding ratios of "bad" news. In the South, the observed amount of "bad" news (obs=290) exceeds the expected (exp=206). In Siberia, too, the ratio of "negative" news (obs=255) is higher than expected (exp=193). An opposite trend is exhibited by the Centre and the Far East. In the Centre, "bad" news are covered less often (obs=274) than expected (exp=357). In the Far East, too, the observed amount of "bad" news (obs=179) is lower than the expected (exp=239).

With regard to "good" vs. "bad" news in the regions' coverage, the centres are the Central region and the Far East, and the peripheries are Siberia and the South. The news on the Centre and the Far East contain the lowest ratios of "bad" news and the highest ratios of "good" news which infers that these regions are the least hazardous/safest, and in this sense, positive. In Siberia's and the South's news, the ratios of "bad" news are the greatest and the ratios of "good" are the smallest among the regions: this characterizes Siberia and the Volga as the most hazardous, i.e. negative, places.

Now that the centres and the peripheries with regard to the projected positivity/negativity were identified among Russia's regions, it is worthwhile to explore which of the positive topics are overrepresented or underrepresented in the outstanding regions (the Centre, the Far East, Siberia and the South). In order to identify the topics that account for the over-representation of "good" news in the Centre and the Far East and the topics that account for the under-representation of "good" news in Siberia and the South, another chi-square is run. It takes into consideration the data on the individual

"good" topics: 'society', 'economics', 'politics', 'culture' and 'science and technology'. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 14:

Table 14: Chi-square test of the individual news topics comprising the "good" news in the coverage of Russia's regions

category	Centre			Far East			North-West			Siberia			South			The Urals			Volga			χ^2
news topics	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	
negative topics' con			21			44			15			34			35			11			3	
culture	32	41	3	21	14	3	18	23	1	17	14	1	18	8	6	15	16	0	14	20	3	
economics	143	87	22	95	111	3	81	89	1	77	86	1	82	45	**17**	67	64	0	61	124	65	
science	10	9	0	7	13	**6**	6	4	0	5	7	1	6	2	2	5	2	2	4	5	0	
society	253	422	**113**	169	197	**5**	143	113	6	137	61	**42**	146	86	24	119	131	1	108	65	17	
politics	53	15	27	35	52	**8**	30	32	0	29	36	2	30	57	**23**	25	21	1	23	12	5	
positive topics' con			**165**			**25**			8			**47**			**72**			4			90	
total con			185			67			24			80			108			15			94	
χ^2																						573

exp – expected value; obs – observed value; con – a category's contribution to the chi-square: $con = (obs - exp)^2/exp$; negative topics' con – the sum of all negative topics' contributions to the chi-square; positive topics' con – the sum of all positive topics' contributions to the chi-square; total con – the region's total contribution to the chi-square (the sum of all categories' contributions to the chi-square); χ^2 – chi-square

* the numerical data in the table were rounded to whole numbers

The test detects a significant difference between the regions with regard to the news topics (χ^2=573, p<0.001). The Centre (total con=185), the Far East (total con=67), Siberia (total con=80) and the South (total con=108) are among the key contributors to the difference. (Another region that makes a sizable contribution to the chi-square is the Volga: total con=94. However, since the Volga did not stand out with regard to the ratios of "positive" vs. "negative" news, its result will not be discussed at length).[17] The contributions of the remaining regions (the North-West and the Urals) to the difference are small: they will not be discussed. Let us begin with the "positive" topics.

We will be comparing the contributions of individual positive topics to the value *positive topics' con,* i.e. to the sum of all positive topics' contributions.

In the Centre, the bulk of the positive topics' contribution to the chi-square (positive topics' con=165) is made up by 'society' news (con=113). The observed amount of news stories on this topic (obs=422) by far surpasses the expected (exp=253). Other "positive" topics make very modest contributions to the Centre's result. Thus, the Centre's higher ratio of positive news identified earlier seems to be ensured by a higher ratio of social news.

In the Far East, the contribution of the "positive" topics (positive topics' con=25) is divided between 'society' (con=5), 'politics' (con=8) and 'science and technology' (con=6). Thus, the Far East's higher ratio of "positive" news identified earlier seems to be accounted for by these three topics.

As to Siberia, the only topic that is noticeable in the contribution of the "positive" topics (positive topics' con=47) is 'society' (con=42). The expected amount of 'social' news in Siberia is much greater (exp=137) than the observed amount (obs=61). Thus, the lower ratio of positive topics identified earlier in Siberia's news seems to be due to the lower ratio of social news in this region.

In the South, the contribution of the "positive" topics to the difference (positive topics' con=72) is shared among three topics: 'society' (con=24), 'economics' (con=17) and 'politics' (con=23). The observed amount of "society' news in the South (obs=86) is

[17] In the chi-square test for individual topics, the Volga is one of the main contributors. Its results are accounted by economics news (they are more numerous than expected) and society news (they are less numerous than expected). The Volga did not stand out in the previous chi-square test for "bad" vs. "good" news because the abundance of economics news overlapped with the lack of society news and neutralized the region's overall result.

much lower than the expected (*exp*=146). The same applies to 'economics' news: their observed amount (*obs*=45) falls behind the expected (*exp*=92). 'Politics' news exhibit an opposite trend: they appear more often (*obs*=57) than expected (*exp*=30). However, even the higher ratio of the positive topics "politics" fails to balance the lack of positive topics in general. Thus, the South's lower ratio of "positive" news identified earlier seems to be accounted for by the lower ratio of social and economic news.

With regard to the positive news topics in the regions' coverage, the centres are the Central region and the Far East, and the peripheries are the South and Siberia. The higher representation of social issues (as compared to most regions) in the news on the Centre and the Far East characterize these regions as "people-oriented". Apart from "people-orientedness", the Far Eastern news project "political activeness" (through greater attention to political issues) and "scientific activeness" (through a higher representation of science and technology issues). The lower ratios of social issues in the news on Siberia and the South communicate the idea that these regions are not "people-oriented". A lower representation of economical issues in the South's news implies the idea that this region is not economically active.

3.6. Urbanity vs. rurality

Urbanity/rurality is a dimension of the centre-periphery divide. The centre-periphery dichotomy is often understood as the dichotomy of the city vs. the small town and/or the village. The concepts of urbanity/rurality and the centre/periphery intersect. Urbanity overlaps with the concept of the centre through the ideas of modernity and civilization. Rurality is related to the concept of the periphery through the ideas of backwardness and traditionality. Therefore, the more urban news and the less rural news there are in a region's coverage, the more urban (=modern=central) the region appears, and vice versa.

The results on the representation of urban vs. rural places in the regions' news are presented in Table 15 below:

Table 15: Urban and rural news in the coverage of Russia's regions

category	Centre		Far East		North-West		Siberia		South		Urals		Volga	
urbanity/ rurality	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
urban news	716	**97**	209	92	280	94	202	**90**	237	92	175	94	160	92
rural news	21	3	19	8	18	6	22	10	20	8	11	6	13	8
total	737	100	228	100	298	100	224	100	257	100	186	100	173	100

*bold highlights indicate outstanding results

As can be seen from Table 15, there is a predominance of urban places over rural ones in the news on each region. The ratios of urban and rural places are similar in all regions as well. Bigger and smaller cities are covered in 90-97 % of the news stories: the Centre – 97 %, the Far East – 92 %, the North-West – 94 %, Siberia – 90 %, the South – 92 %, the Urals -94 %, the Volga – 92 %. Towns and villages are referred to in 3-10 %: the Centre – 3 %, the Far East – 8 %, the North-West – 6 %, Siberia – 10 %, the South – 8 %, the Urals -6 %, the Volga – 8%. Thus, all regions are similar to each other in the sense that they focus on urban places while paying minimal attention to rural places. However, two regions slightly stand out from others: the Centre and Siberia. The Centre is a region with the greatest ratio of the "urban" news (716/737; 97%) and the smallest ratio of "rural" (21/737; 3 %). Siberia is a region that exhibits the lowest amount of "urban" news (202/224; 90%) and the highest amount of "rural" news (22/224; 10%).

The significance of the aforementioned descriptive statistical results is subjected to the chi-square analysis. The chi-square test shows that the differences between Russia's regions with regard to urban vs. rural places are significant (χ^2=24, $p<0.01$). The results of the test are presented in Table 16 below:

Table 16: Chi-square test of urban vs. rural news in the coverage of Russia's regions

category	Centre			Far East			North-West			Siberia			South			The Urals			Volga			χ^2
urbanity/rurality	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	exp	obs	con	
urban news	694	716	1	215	209	0	280	280	0	211	202	0	242	237	0	175	175	0	163	160	0	
rural news	43	21	**12**	13	19	2	18	18	0	13	22	**6**	15	20	2	11	11	0	10	13	1	
total con			**13**			2			0			**6**			2			0			1	
χ^2																						24

exp – expected value; obs – observed value; con – the contribution to the chi-square: $con = (obs - exp)^2/exp$;

total con per region – the region's total contribution to the chi-square, χ^2 – chi-square;

bold highlights show outstanding results

* the numerical data in the table were rounded to whole numbers

Table 16 shows that not all regions contribute to the chi-square equally. In particular, most regions' contributions to the difference (the Far East, the North-West, the South, the Urals and the Volga) are either very small or zero. The chi-square is mostly accounted for by only two regions, the Centre (con total per region=13) and Siberia (con total per region=6).

The Centre's contribution to the chi-square is made up predominantly by the "rural" news (con=12): their observed amount (obs=21) is almost twice as low as the expected (exp=43). The contribution of Siberia is accounted only by the "rural" news (con=6), but as opposite to the Centre, their observed amount (obs=22) is greater than the expected (exp=13).

With regard to the coverage of urban vs. rural places, the centre is the Central region and the periphery is Siberia. The Centre exhibits the smallest ratio of rural news among the regions which infers that the region is the least rural (=the most urban). Siberia's ratio of rural news is the highest among the region: this characterizes it as the most rural (=the least urban) region.

3.7. Summary of the results on the regions' news

As follows from the description of the results on the regions' news, most regions exhibit both central and peripheral characteristics in their news: there seems to be no absolute centres or peripheries: one and the same region appears as a centre with regard to one category and as a periphery with regard to another category. Yet, some regions appear as more central and others are represented as "more peripheral". With regard to the centre vs. periphery characteristics, the regions fall under three groups: 1) where centre characteristics prevail over periphery ones; 2) where periphery characteristics prevail over centre ones; and 3) where the number of the centre and the periphery characteristics is the same. In the Centre and the Far East, the centre characteristics outnumber the periphery ones. In the North-West, Siberia, the South and the Volga, on the contrary, the periphery characteristics prevail over the centre ones. Finally, one region, the Urals, displayed one central characteristic and one periphery characteristic. Thus, the Centre and

the Far East can be characterized as centres and the remaining regions (except the Urals), - the North-West, Siberia, the South and the Volga, - can be described as peripheries. The Urals's position on the centre-periphery "map" is ambiguous. The second step in comparing the regions with regard to their centrality/peripherality is to identify the differences between the regions within each group. It would be useful to know 1) which of the two "central" regions – the Centre or the Far East, - is more central; 2) which of the three "peripheral" regions, - the North-West, Siberia, the South and the Volga, - is most/least "peripheral"; 3) how the Urals compares to the "central" and the "peripheral" regions; 4) how "far" the "central" and the "peripheral" region (with the Urals in between) are from one another. To answer these questions, the degrees of the regions' centrality/peripherality will be represented rated.

In constructing the regions' centrality/peripherality ratings, the following considerations will be taken in account. A region's centrality/peripherality depends not only on the number of centre/periphery categories with which it correlates, but also on the relevance of these categories and on the strength of a region's correlation (positive or negative) with a category. In this study, the researcher differentiates between primary and secondary centre/periphery categories. High/low newsworthiness, a region's visibility/invisibility, the agents' publicity/anonymity, the agents' personification/impersonality and a region's positivity (comprising safety, people-orientedness, economic activeness, political activeness, scientific activeness and cultural activeness) and negativity (comprising hazardness, people-neglect, economic inertness, political inertness, scientific inertness and cultural inertness) are the primary centre-periphery categories since they refer to the ideas of importance/unimportance and positivity/negativity which are the definitive features of the centre/periphery. A region's urbanity/rurality is considered as a secondary centre-periphery category since urbanity/rurality is another dimension of the centre-periphery dichotomy, rather than a characteristic.

The difference between the primary and the secondary centre-periphery characteristics can be captured through numerical values. The primary characteristics will be assigned a value of 1: 1 represents the wholeness of the positive result. The secondary characteristic of urbanity/rurality will be assigned a value of 0.5: 0.5 reflects its semi-relevance.

Furthermore, to differentiate between central (e.g., the agents' publicity) and peripheral (e.g., the agents' anonymity) characteristics, the former will be positive numbers (+1 and +0.5) and the latter will be negative numbers (-1 and -0.5).

The different strengths of the regions' correlations with the categories should also be represented numerically. The strength of a region's correlation with a category follows from the degree of a region's contribution to the chi-square (with regard to that category). The degrees of the regions' contributions to each chi-square have been already assessed earlier in the study, at the stage of the description of the results. When describing a region's contribution (con total per region) to the chi-square (χ^2), the researcher differentiated between strong, moderate and weak contributions on the basis of the following tentative principle. A contribution was considered to be weak if it accounted for 14% or less of the difference. A contribution was considered to be strong if it accounted for 28% or more of χ^2. A contribution was considered to be moderate if it accounted for more than 14% and less than 30% of χ^2. The logic that underlies these percentages is as follows: 14% is the minimal meaningful contribution that each of the seven regions can make to the difference since 14% is one seventh, therefore 14% corresponds to a weak correlation. A moderate correlation is understood as two minimal contributions which result into 28%. Any percentage that is above the sum of two minimal contributions (14*2=28) is considered here as a strong correlation. A contribution accounting for less than 5% was not considered as a positive result. Arbitrary as this rating principle may seem, it is designed to help in presenting the array of the regions' centre-periphery characteristics in a tangible form.

A region's strong/moderate/weak contribution to the chi-square of a particular category translates into that region's strong/moderate/weak correlation with the category. A moderate correlation will be assigned a value of 1: 1 represents a basic, average result. A value of 0.5 will be given to a weak correlation: the idea is that a weak correlation reduces the "weight" of a characteristic by half. A value of 1.5 will be assigned to a strong correlation: it increases the "weight" of a characteristic by half.

Furthermore, one needs to differentiate between a positive and a negative correlation: a positive correlation will be a positive number (+0.5, +1 and +1.5) and a negative correlation will be a negative number (-0.5, -1 and -1.5).

Now that the relevance of a centre/periphery feature and the strength of a region's correlation with a feature have been represented numerically, one can assess how each of the regions' projected characteristics contributes to the region's role as a centre or a periphery. For instance, in the news, the Centre exhibits a noticeably higher ratio of social news which communicates the idea that the region is people-oriented. This characteristic can be measured by the following formula: the characteristic's degree of relevance multiplied by the strength of the region's correlation with the category: +1 * +0.5 = +0.5, where +1 designates that the features in question is central and primary, +0.5 shows that the correlation is positive and weak. The resulting number +0.5 is the weight of the Centre's characteristic "people-orientedness", where the "+" symbol shows that the characteristic is central and the value 0.5 is a "function" of the characteristic's pure value modified by the strength of the correlation. In other words, the formula +1 * +0.5 = +0.5 shows that though people-orientedness is originally a primary central characteristic, the Centre's correlation with it is weak, so it adds to the region's centrality only modestly. All other characteristics that a region exhibits in its news are measured in the same way, by using a by a formula: $X = \pm A * \pm B$ where X is the weight of the characteristic, A is the degree of the feature's relevance and B is the strength of the correlation.

After calculating the weights of all of the region's characteristics, central and peripheral, one can sum them up so as to calculate the region's ultimate centre-periphery index (Y) by the formula: x1+x2+…. . For instance, the representation of the Volga in the news has three characteristics: low newsworthiness, visibility and impersonality. Low newsworthiness is projected through the region's noticeably lower ratio in the total amount of news (a strong negative correlation A=-1.5 with the category of newsworthiness which is a primary central feature (B=+1). Visibility results from the region's higher ratio of pictures in its news, i.e. from a moderate positive correlation A=+1 with the category of visibility which is a primary central feature (B=+1). Impersonality is projected through the region's somewhat lower ratio of human pictures, i.e. a weak negative correlation A=-0.5 with the category of personification which is a primary central category (B=+1). The Volga's ultimate centre-periphery index (Y) is calculated as follows: (+1*-1.5) + (+1*+1*) + (+1*-0.5) = -1. The Volga's centre-

periphery index (Y=-1) is a negative number which shows that overall, the region's representation in the news is peripheral.

The summary of the region's centrality/peripherality rating system is provided in Table 17 below:

Table 17: Summary of the centrality/peripherality rating system

measure	function	definition	formula
a region's ultimate centre-periphery index (Y)	shows whether a region's representation is predominantly central or peripheral	the sum of the region's central and peripheral features (X1, X2 ...)	Y = X1+ X2 + ...
weight of a region's characteristic	represents the contribution of a characteristic to a region's centrality/periherality	the multiplication of the category's degree of relevance (A) and the strength (B) of the region's correlation with that category	X = A*B
a category's degree of relevance and its central or peripheral nature (A)	shows the relevance of a category (to the centre-periphery concept) and whether it is central or peripheral	two levels of relevance: 1) primary central/peripheral 2) secondary central/peripheral	1) primary relevance: A= $\pm$1 2) secondary: A=$\pm$0.5
the strength of the region's correlation with a category and its positive or negative type (B)	show how typical/atypical a characteristic is of a region	six types of correlation: 1) strong positive: very typical 2) strong negative: very atypical 3) moderate positive: typical	1) strong positive: +1.5 2) strong negative: -1.5 3) moderate positive: +1

		4) moderate negative: atypical 5) weak positive: rather typical 6) weak negative: rather atypical	4) moderate negative: -1 5) weak positive: +0.5 6) weak negative: -0.5

It should be noted that the above rating system is only tentative since it is not based on statistical procedures and does not meet the requirements for a statistical instrument. Arbitrary as this ranging system may seem to be, it facilitates making comparisons between the regions with regard to their centrality/peripherality and allows for a tentative assessment of the regions' roles as centres or peripheries.

Table 18 below contains the summary of the regions' centre-periphery characteristics and the assessment of the regions' differing degrees of centrality and peripherality:

Table 18: Centre-periphery rating of Russia's regions

news feature	characteristic	the numerical assessment of the regions' characteristics						
		Centre	**Far East**	**North-West**	**Siberia**	**South**	**Urals**	**Volga**
a region's ratio in the total amount of news	high/low newsworthiness	+1*{+1.5}= **+1.5** - the region is **{very}** important	+1*{+1}= **+1** - the region is {-} important	+1*{-0.5}= **-0.5** - the region is **{not very}** important	+1*{-1}= **-1** - the region is {-} unimportant	+1*{-0.5}= **-0.5** - the region is **{not very}** important	+1*{-1}= **-1** - the region is {-} unimportant	+1*-1.5= **-1.5** - the region is **{not at all}** important
"good" news in the total amount of news: -'society' -'economics' -'politics' -'science and -technology' -culture	positivity: -people-orientedness; -economic activeness; -political activeness; -scientific activeness; -cultural activeness	+1*{+1}= **+1** - the region is {-} people-oriented	+1*{+0.5}= **+0.5** - the region is **{rather}** people-oriented; - the region is **{rather}** politically active; - the region is **{rather}** scientifically active		+1*{-1}= **-1** - the region is not {-} people-oriented	+1*{-1.5}= **-1.5** - the region is **{not at all}** people-oriented; - the region is **{not at all}** economically active		

"bad" news in the total amount of news: - 'accidents' -'power structures'	negativity: - hazardness	-1*{-1}= **+1** the region is {-} not hazardous	-1*{-1}= **+1** the region is {-} not hazardous		-1*{+1}= **-1** the region is {-} hazardous	-1*{+1.5}= **-1.5** the region is **{very}** hazardous		
pictured vs. unpictured news	importance of a region's events	+1*{-1.5}= **-1.5** the region's events are **{not at all}** important			+1*{+1}= **+1** the region's events are {-} important			+1*+1= **+1** the region's events are {-} important
named vs. unnamed agents	importance of a region's agents	+1*{-1.5}= **-1.5** the region's agents are **{not at all}** important				+1*{+1.5}= **+1.5** the region's agents are **{very}** important		
human vs. non-human pictures	importance of a region's agents						+1*{+1}= **+1** the region's agents are {-} important	+1*-0.5= **-0.5** the region's agents are **{not very}** important

rural news vs. urban news	rurality	-0.5*{-1.5}= **+0.75** the region is **{not at all}** rural			-0.5*{+1.5}= **-0.75** the region is **{very}** rural			
region's ultimate centre-periphery index	centrality vs. peripherality	**+1.25**	**+2.5**	**-0.5**	**-2.75**	**-2**	**0**	**-1**

{very}: a strong positive correlation with the category;

{not at all}: a strong negative correlation with the category;

{-}: a moderate positive correlation with the category;

{-} not: a moderate negative correlation with the category;

{rather}: a weak positive correlation with the category;

{not very}: a weak negative correlation with the category

Let us consider the last row of Table 18 that shows the regions' ultimate centre-periphery indexes. Most of Russia's regions, the North-West, Siberia, the South, and the Volga, appear as peripheries: their centre-periphery indexes are negative numbers ranging from -2.75 to -0.5. However, these regions differ in the degree of their peripherality. Siberia (-2.75) and the South (-2) can be described as "primary" peripheries. The North-West (-0.5) and the Volga (-1) can be characterized as "secondary" peripheries. The centres are the Far East (+2.5) and the Central region (+1.25). One region, the Urals, cannot be characterized either as central or peripheral: its centre-periphery index is zero.

The results on the regions' projected centrality/peripherality can now be juxtaposed to some of the initial hypotheses put forward at the beginning of the study.

Hypothesis # 1: in the news, the Central region will be represented in the most positive light.

The Centre's results contradict this hypothesis. The region's centrality is challenged by a provincial region, the Far East whose centrality index (+2.5) is higher than the Centre's (+1.25). However, the most important point is that there emerge two centres while only one was expected.

Hypothesis # 2: Moscow will account for most of the positive image of the Central region.

This hypothesis was not addressed in the "Results" section since the initial analysis of the data was meant to reveal the general centre-periphery picture of the regions. The contribution of Moscow will be explicated at the stage of the interpretation of the results as the task of the interpretation will require additional scrutiny of the data pertaining to all regions. The question of the role of Moscow is addressed in the following section, "Interpretation and discussion".

Hypothesis # 3: in the news, the provincial regions will be represented mostly in the negative light, i.e. as the periphery.

The results on most regions, the North-West, Siberia, the South, the Urals and the Volga, comply with hypothesis # 3: Judging by the negative centrality-peripherality

indexes of these regions, their overall images are peripheral. The only exception is the Far East. Its centrality-peripherality index is a positive number. Furthermore, the Far East's degree of centrality is greater than the Centre's. Thus, hypothesis # 3 is only partly confirmed.

The regions' results with regard to their central/peripheral representations in the news pose a number of questions. First, it is unexpected that in the news, the Far East appeared to be more central than the Central Region itself and the latter did not live to its name. Second, it is puzzling that the North-West is the only region that did not stand out in any qualitative aspect of the news (e.g., topics, agents, pictures, etc), considering that this region is home to the second biggest city in the country, Saint Petersburg, which could have influenced the region's coverage, but did not do so.

The explanation of the aforementioned results is attempted in the following chapter of the thesis, "Interpretation and discussion".

CHAPTER 4: INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the factors that could have accounted for the regions' centre-periphery characteristics (described in the previous chapter) as projected in RIA Novosti.

4.1. The regions' centre-periphery characteristics

The representation of Russia's regions in RIA Novosti could have been affected by multiple factors. Such factors can be tentatively divided into four groups: 1) "objective"; 2) production-related; 3) reception-related; and 4) editorial. Let us consider these groups in greater detail.

"Objective" factors

It is a common place in media studies that news are not an accurate representation of reality. In the context of this study, it means that the representation of a region in the news does not mirror its actual characteristics. However, the view that news is a total fiction seems to be simplistic. Since news bear on actual events, it is likely that a region's projected characteristic can be at least partly grounded in the regions' actual situation. The speculations on whether or not a region's projected characteristic might be grounded in its "objective reality" will be based on the researcher's knowledge of the socio-cultural context of today's Russia.

Production-related factors

News is a media product: the process of making news is similar to the process of producing merchandise. For instance, the amount of news can be contingent on the number of reporters, journalists and other types of staff, just like the number of workers at a factory influences the product outcome. Some places receive less extensive news coverage because the local news offices are understaffed. The amount of news on a particular place can also depend on how easily one can access it and how (in)expensive it is to maintain operating facilities (i.e. to keep a permanent office or to send reporters) to

that place. Some places are never covered in the news just because they are far away from the news office and/or it is expensive to send reporters there. Furthermore, such parameters of news as the amount of news stories, the provision of a picture can be contingent on such constraints as the limited physical space of an edition, be it the number of pages in a newspaper or the capacity of a news website.

Should a region's characteristic be found to be accounted for by production constraints/stimuli, it will be dismissed as irrelevant.

Reception-related factors

Reception-related factors could be considered as part of the news production chain. News makers are willing to cater to the interests and preferences of their readership (i.e. consumers). This is essential for their success as a business. In this view, the amount of news on a place can be contingent on how large is the place's ratio in the total [target] readership of the edition. The quality of news, i.e. how a place is covered, can also depend on the mental frames that representatives of a culture have about that place. For instance, if the reader is used (or has been accustomed by the media) to receive information on a certain area in connection with particular topics, it is unlikely that the news makers would risk trying new topics. Simply put, news makers provide the information that they believe their readers want and/or are capable to "digest". The information is presented in the way that the news makers believe would be appealing to and digestible for the reader.

Editorial factors

Finally, the quantity and quality of news on a place can be affected by the perspective of the news edition owners/editors which could follow from their personal views and/or the views of the social, political and economic groups with which they are affiliated and/or which they support. The editorial factor should not be overestimated: the representation of places (and other social entities) is not always accounted for by editorial biases since there can be many other factors affecting the news coverage (see above). However, the role of the editorial stance cannot be underestimated: no media can be absolutely impartial.

Before exploring which of the aforementioned factors could have possibly affected the representation of the regions in the news, one needs to make sure that the inferential characteristic (e.g. hazardness) is not affected by the coverage of an extraordinary event (e.g. a major technological disaster). For instance, in order to fulfill this task with regard to the projected hazardness, one needs to see if the higher ratio of the accident news is not brought by the coverage of one/few major accidents. Should the projected characteristics be found to be associated with sensational events, it will be considered as irrelevant and excluded from the discussion. However, it needs to be emphasized that the "outstanding event" factor (the influence of outstanding events) is only applicable to cases when the corresponding feature is *over*-represented (e.g., a *higher* ratio of accidents news). The "outstanding event" factor is meant to answer the question "what is *present* in the news on a particular type of topics, places, agents that could have *increased* their ratios". It cannot answer the question of "what is *absent* from the news on a particular type of topics, places, agents that could have decreased their ratios".

It should be noted that the present study does not aim to answer the question "Which of the factors accounts for a given characteristic of a region?" This question would be incorrect since media coverage is affected by a multitude of various factors that could be interconnected. Thus, the researcher will only attempt to consider all possible factors and "shortlist" those that seem to be the most viable.

Let us now proceed to the discussion and interpretation of the regions' centre-periphery characteristics.

4.1.1. The Centre

In RIA Novosti news, the Centre exhibited both central and peripheral characteristics. The region's central characteristics are: 1) high newsworthiness; 2) safety; 3) people-orientedness; and 4) urbanity. The peripheral characteristics exhibited by the Centre in the news are: 1) invisibility; and 2) anonymity.

Let us begin with the central characteristics and consider the Centre's newsworthiness. The exploration of the Centre's coverage did not reveal any outstanding

(i.e. recurring news stories) events. Thus, the "outstanding event" factor can be ruled out. The second step is to find out whether the Centre's high newsworthiness is a by-product of the news on Moscow. In order to find out if this is the case, another chi-square test was run; Moscow was removed from the Centre's data. Without Moscow, the Centre's news were not different from most regions: the Centre did not stand out as an highly newsworthy place. This means that high newsworthiness is actually a characteristic of Moscow, rather than the Central region as a whole.

Now the task is to explain why Moscow is the primary source of news among the Centre's places. There could be "objective", production-, reception-related and/or editorial reasons for that. It could be that Moscow is "objectively" the home to more events than any other bigger city of the region (and, even any other bigger city of the country). This could be due to the Moscow's population size alone: more people means more interactions and more actual events to be reported on. Furthermore, the abundance of events in the coverage of Moscow could be accounted for by the status of the city as the political, economic, cultural and administrative centre of Russia: it is not that there are physically more events happening in Moscow, rather more events are deemed as important since they pertain to the political, economic, cultural and administrative life of the *capital*. The production factors could be at play as well. It could be that Moscow's office as the head office of RIA Novosti employs more journalists as compared to other places of the region. Furthermore, since Moscow organizations (both government and private) use internet most extensively in comparison to other places of the region (and even other places in Russia), it could be an additional factor that helps Moscow journalist to contact their sources before arriving at the site of events or even without being physically present there. Moscow's high newsworthiness can be also related to the reception factor, the fact that 70 % of the Centre's RIA Novosti readership comes from Moscow. The editorial factor also seems to be a viable explanation. It could be that RIA Novosti's editors support the interests of Moscow's elites who are interested in the extensive coverage of Moscow's issues.

Let us proceed to the Centre's projected safety. In the news, the Centre was presented as a safe place: its ratio of "bad" news ('accidents' and 'power structures') is lower than in most regions. First, one needs to explore how Moscow is related to the region's

projected safety. It could be a characteristic of Moscow rather than the Centre's at large, considering that Moscow accounts for 70% of the Central news. In order to verify this assumption, another chi-square test for news topics was performed; Moscow was excluded from the Centre's data. After the removal of Moscow from the Centre's data, the Centre's news was not different from most regions' news with regard to "bad" news. This means that the projected safety is actually a characteristic of Moscow, not of the Central region as a whole.

The question is why news makers covered Moscow in connection with hazards less often. There could be objective, production, reception and/or editorial factors for that. First, the projected safety could mirror the objective situation in the city: it could be that Moscow's rate of accidents is lower than that of other places in the region (and even other places in the country). This could be a result of the capital's security policies: since Moscow is the administrative centre and the "shopping window" of the whole country, it could be that the authorities make extra effort to ensure security in Moscow. Another viable factor is a reception one: the ratio of accidents could have been reduced deliberately to cater to the preferences of the Moscow readership who might not like getting the impression that they live in an unsafe place. The production factor could be at play as well. It could be that the providers of 'accident' news, local divisions of the Ministries of Internal Affairs (including the police) and the Ministry of Emergencies, are less accessible to the Centre journalists as compared to the providers of other types of information, e.g. municipal offices as providers of 'social' news. In its turn, the accessibility of the aforementioned providers of 'accident' news could be accounted for by their own public relations and other factors. Furthermore, the lower representation of accidents in Moscow's news could have been influenced by the editorial stance. There might be political, economical and social reasons to make Moscow appear safer. Safety is perceived as resulting from the authorities' efforts: the high level of safety suggests that the local authorities are professional and capable of controlling the situation, and therefore, trustworthy. Safety is also a necessary condition for keeping the existing investors and attracting new ones, domestic or foreign. Safety is one of the key considerations for tourists, especially, for those from abroad. In short, Moscow's projected safety could be a necessary link in maintaining a positive and welcoming image

of a place: it is a message addressed to the political elites, public and business at the national and international levels.

Let us consider the Centre's inferential people-orientedness. The possibility that the Centre's focus on social issues is accounted for the "outstanding event" factor seems to be low: outstanding events, more often than not, are negative (in RIA Novosti news, such news are placed in the subsection 'accidents'). The exploration of the Centre news did not reveal any outstanding event(s) (i.e. recurrent events) in the 'society' block. Thus, the social focus of the Centre's news is not chance. The next step is to find out whether or not this characteristic is brought about by Moscow.[18] In order to check this assumption, another chi-square test for news topics was performed; Moscow was removed from the Centre's data. However, it did not change the Centre's results: the Centre still exhibited a high ratio of social news as compared to other regions. This means that the social focus is a characteristic of the Centre's news at large, not just Moscow's news.

Let us consider the kinds of factors that could possibly account for the Centre's journalist choice: "objective", production-, reception-related and/or editorial. It could be that the Centre's social focus reflects the region's "objective" situation. It could be that the social policy pursued by the Centre's government is the most effective among Russia's regions: hence more developments of the social character (more infrastructure is built, social assistance is provided more frequently, more social events are organized, etc), hence news on such developments. Unfortunately, the study does not have any factual data to substantiate this explanation.[19] As to the production factor, the Central news' focus on social issues could be a result of the greater availability of "social" information in comparison to other types of information, e.g. the major sources of information for the Centre's journalists (as follows from the exploration of the region's 'society' news) are municipalities. It could be that in the Central region, administrative institutions have more efficient public relations teams than other agencies, such as local divisions of the Ministries of Internal Affairs (including the police) and the Ministry of Emergencies that transfer information of accidents. The reception considerations can also

[18] The additional exploration of Moscow news showed that they have a social focus.

[19] The only statistical data on the social policy in the regions is the ratio of social expenses in the regions. However, these data cannot be used to access the "objective" situation in the regions regarding social policies, since they do not show how efficiently the funds are used.

be a factor. Since 'society' news are positioned as "good" (or "neutral) news in RIA Novosti, the predominance of social issues in the news on the Centre could testify to the efforts of the editors to cater to RIA Novosti readership who live in the Centre. The editorial factor cannot be excluded either. The fact that the social focus extends on the whole region, not just Moscow, suggests the likelihood that the Centre's editors might support the interests of agents who come from other areas of Moscow and/or the interests of Moscow agents in other areas of the Centre. These agents might be interested in getting a positive image of the Central region.

Let us turn to the Centre's projected urbanity. Theoretically, the under-representation of the Centre's rural places could be due to various factors: "objective", production-, reception-related and editorial. However, not all of them seem to be viable. As to the "objective" factor, it is easy to think that, probably, there are fewer events in the Centre's rural places vs. the Centre's urban places as compared to other regions. However, it is impossible to find it out since an event is a very subjective notion: in the news, any information can be turned into an event. It is unlikely that the Centre's rural places do not possess some essential features (that other regions' rural places have) to lead to their under-representation.

Let us proceed to the production factor. Rural places as compared to cities do not tend to be easily accessible, especially in Russia. However, this is hardly a factor here since the Central region has the most developed transportation system: the Central's rural places cannot be less accessible than other regions' rural places. It could be that the Centre's division has fewer journalists assigned to rural areas (there could be a reason for that to which we will return later in the discussion on the Centre). A reception-related factor could be at play as well: it could be in the Centre, the rural population vs. urban population accounts for a smaller ratio of the [target] readership in comparison to other regions. As to the "editorial" factor, it is difficult to think of any type of partiality/biases toward the Centre's rural places at large.

There is also an alternative way to approach the under-representation of the Centre's rural places: it could be related to the coverage of the Centre's bigger cities. As was pointed out above, news makers have to set limits on the amount of news by making choices between important and unimportant information, i.e. the information that are

newsworthy and not newsworthy. It could be the Centre's bigger cities "supply" so many "important" information that there is no space to fit the information on the rural places. The exploration of the Centre's urban news showed that most of them (80%) come from Moscow only. Thus, the under-representation of rural places in the Centre's news (as compared to the representation of rural places in other regions) seems to be associated with the Centre's preoccupation with Moscow-city, rather than with bigger cities in general. This assumption can be tested statistically by running another chi-square test for urban vs. rural places without Moscow-city in the Centre's news. The removal of Moscow from the Centre's data reversed the Centre's trend: the region now stood out with a *lack* of urban places. Thus, the under-representation of rural places in the Centre's news is, indeed, related to the overrepresentation of Moscow. Let us consider the factors that could account for the prevalence of Moscow in the Centre's news.

The great amount of news on Moscow indicates that the city's events are deemed as more important than those of any other place in the Centre, especially those of rural places. Although the notion of the important information is very subjective, Moscow's newsworthiness is grounded in "objective" reality, i.e. in the status of the city. Not only Moscow is the biggest city of the Central region, it is the country's capital, in the first place. Much of the information originating from Moscow is of interest not only to Moscow residents and the residents of the regions, but also to Russia's residents in general. Furthermore, the predominance of Moscow in the Centre's news could be related to the production factors. The head office of RIA Novosti is located in the capital. Since a head office normally employs the largest number of reporters, the greater amount of news on Moscow could be a realization of the formula "more staff, more product output". It could be that Moscow's journalists produce so much news that there is no need to "import" news from other places, especially from rural ones. Moreover, Moscow's information is easily accessible: there is no need for journalists to travel to other places, in particular rural places, when there is a plenty of news "material" in Moscow. The reception-related factor could be at play as well. According to the data of the internet statistics site Liveinternet, 57 % of the RIA Novosti users are based in Moscow.[20] Thus, greater amount of news on Moscow could result from the news makers' effort to cater to

[20] http://www.liveinternet.ru/stat/rian.ru/regions.html

the needs of the major readership by "sacrificing" the interests of populations of other Centre's places, in particular, towns and villages. The editorial factor cannot be excluded either. The owners/managers of RIA Novosti might be connected with/supported by some of Moscow's financial and political elites (at the federal and/or municipal levels), or be members of those elites.

Let us now consider the Centre's periphery features: invisibility and anonymity. In the news, the Centre was the least visible: this characteristic resulted from a high ratio of news without images. Considering that Moscow accounts for the bulk of the Centre's news, the Centre's invisibility could be actually a characteristic of the region at large, rather than of Moscow only. In order to verify this assumption, a chi-square test for the picture presence-absence was performed on the Centre's data without Moscow. However, this did not change the Centre's original result: the Centre still stood out with a higher ratio of pictureless news. Thus, invisibility as a projected characteristic refers to the Central region as a whole.

Outside the context, invisibility is a negative/peripheral characteristic since it reduces the noticing effect, and, therefore, a region's prominence. However, it is meaningful what types of news are associated with invisibility. If the Centre's higher ratio of pictureless news is ensured by "negative" news, such as 'accidents' and 'power structures', then invisibility should not be considered as a negative characteristics since it reduces the noticing of negative news. However, a chi-square test on the Centre's news without accidents did not change the region's result. Thus, the Centre's invisibility is not associated with "bad news" and therefore, is a negative characteristic.

Now the task is to answer the question of what made news makers attach fewer pictures to the Centre's news stories. There are four types of factors to consider: objective, reception, production and editorial. Theoretically, any of them could be responsible for the lower ratio of pictures in the Centre's news. However, not all of them seem to be applicable or viable. In particular, it does not make sense to explore the objective factor to account for the ratio of pictures since the presence/absence of a picture next to the news story does not depend on reality at all: it is purely the news makers' decision. Another factor that does not seem to be viable in the case of the Centre's lower ratio of pictures is the editorial one. Since invisibility is a negative characteristic, the

assumption that the Centre's invisibility is associated with the editorial factor would imply the RIA Novosti bias against themselves (RIA Novosti is based in the Centre): this does not make sense. The reception factor also has a weak potential to account for the Centre's low ratio of pictures. Theoretically, it could be that the Centre's reader prefer the news to be pictureless, RIA Novosti is aware of their preferences and strives to cater to them. But practically, such an assumption does not sound feasible. The only viable explanation of the Centre's invisibility in the news is the production factor. The Centre's lower ratio of pictures could be contingent on the large amount of Moscow's news, the use of stock photography by RIA Novosti and limited space on the internet site. Since pictures take much space on the website, the amount of pictures per news story could have been deliberately reduced to save space. In other words, the amount of news on Moscow is so great, that attaching pictures to them more frequently could make the content exceed the internet space limits. Furthermore, since RIA Novosti relies on stock photography, it could be that the amount of news on Moscow is so great that the news agency does not have a sufficient variety of images.

Let us turn to the Centre's projected anonymity. In the news, the Centre stood out with a high ratio of anonymous agents, i.e. with a higher ratio of unimportant agents. Since 70% of the Central news are on Moscow, it could be that anonymity (projecting the unimportance of agents) is a characteristic of Moscow, rather than the region as a whole. However, a chi-square showed that the Centre' results on anonymity remained the same even without Moscow. Thus, anonymity is a characteristic of the Centre as a whole.

Let us discuss the possible reasons that could influence the Centre news makers' decision not to name a large portion of the Centre's agents. Theoretically, these could include "objective", production, reception and editorial factors. The "objective" factor in this particular case would mean that the Centre's agents are actually less important/the Centre has fewer important agents. This statement is very problematic. First, it seems to contradict the reality: the Centre contains Moscow, and Moscow is home to political, financial and cultural elites. Second, importance is a very subjective category: it is a discourse category that is created by news writers who have the power to position anything or anybody as important. As to the reception factor, it is difficult to think of a reason why the Centre readers would prefer news with anonymous agents. The editorial

factor cannot be excluded: it could be that the anonymous agents are those deemed as unimportant by the editors. The editorial factor can be explored by looking at the types of agents that are left anonymous. This would require a meticulous analysis of the Centre's news with the anonymous agents: this task goes beyond the limits of this study. Thus, the editorial factor is a viable explanation on which the study is unable to elaborate. It is difficult to think of the production constraints that could prevent news makers from providing the agents' names.

Thus, all positive characteristics of the Central Region (high newsworthiness, people-orientedness, safety and urbanity) proved to be associated with Moscow. Most of them could have been accounted for by the objective, production, reception or editorial factors, or a combination of these. As to the Centre's negative characteristics, one of them (invisibility=lower ratio of pictured news) was linked to a production factor. The other negative characteristic (anonymity=lower ratio of named agents) was unaccounted for.

Let us proceed to the factors that could have associated with the centre-periphery characteristics of the Far East.

4.1.2. The Far East

In the news, the Far East exhibited only central characteristics. These are: 1) high newsworthiness; 2) safety; 3) people-orientedness; 4) political activeness; and 4) scientific activeness. The only peripheral characteristic is event-scarcity.

Let us begin with the Far East's high newsworthiness. Theoretically, it could be explained by the "objective", production, reception and editorial factors. The effect of the "objective" factor would mean that the Far East is home to more events in comparison to most regions. The abundance/scarcity of events could be a function of the size of the population. From this perspective, it is questionable that the Far East is an event-abundant place since it is the least populated region in Russia. However, the applicability of the "objective" factor itself is also questionable: event-abundance is a speculative category that cannot be measured. One should keep in mind that in the news, any information can be presented as an event. The involvement of the production factor would mean that the

Far East's office is better staffed in comparison to most regions. This is hardly probable since the Far East is the farthest region to RIA Novosti head office: normally, distant offices are understaffed and/or have poorer facilities. The reception factor is also hardly an explanation for the Far East's high newsworthiness. It is hardly possible that the Far East accounts for a more sizable portion of RIA Novosti readership in comparison to most regions: the Far East's population is small as it is. The objective, production and reception factors excluded, there is only one factor left: the editorial stance. It could be that RIA Novosti editors and/or the affiliated groups are associated with the Far East's stake-holders (e.g. the region's political and business elites) who are interested in the extensive news coverage of the Far East.

Let us consider the Far East's projected safety and people-orientedness. In the course of exploring the region's news, it was revealed that a sizable portion of the region's news classified as 'society' actually refers to accidents. In the Far East's coverage, there could have been less social news and more accidents news if the newsmakers had classified the events appropriately. Thus, the Far East's projected safety and people-orientedness could have resulted from the misclassification of events. In order to verify this assumption, the Far East's 'accidents' and 'society' news were reclassified and subjected to another chi-square test. As a result, the Far East no longer stood out either with a higher ratio of 'social' news, or a lower ratio of 'accident' news. The misclassification of accidents as "social news" could have resulted from the editor's effort to modify the negative image of the Far East. The region is notorious for unsafety and social problems: it has the highest crime rate in the country and the poorest infrastructure that collapses quite frequently in the region's extreme weather. In their turn, the editor's decision could have been affected by the region's government: the latter have the utmost interest in the region to be represented as a socially-oriented and safe place since this positive image would testify to the professionalism and trustworthiness of the local government.

The next central characteristic of the Far East to be considered is the projected political activeness. This characteristic resulted from a higher ratio of 'politics' news in the coverage of the Far East. The exploration of the region's politics news revealed that a large portion of them revolve around two "outstanding" events: the visits of two federal officials. A chi-square test showed that without this block of news, the Far East is not

different from other regions with regard to the ratio of political news. Thus, the projected political activeness of the Far East seems to be accounted for by the "outstanding event" factor.

Scientific activeness is another positive characteristic of the Far East. This characteristic resulted from a higher representation of 'science and technology' issues in the region's news. The exploration of the Far East's 'science and technology' news revealed the following: a large portion of them refer to Amur tigers, featuring stories of their attacks on people and stories of finding tiger cubs in taiga. These news stories do not refer to academic and research institutions per se, i.e. do not correspond to the theme/concept implied by the name of the section 'science and technology'. Thus, the higher ratio of 'science and technology' news could have been brought by the news on Amur tigers, rather than by news on academic and research institutions. To verify this assumption, another chi-square test was run, the Amur tiger-related news were excluded from the Far East's data. As a result, the Far East was not different from other regions with regard to the ratio of 'science and technology' news. Thus, a large portion of the Far East's 'science and technology' does not live up to their name of the news section. Therefore, the projected scientific activeness of the region is unjustified.

Thus, most of the Far East's positive characteristics (high newsworthiness, people-orientedness, safety) seem to be accounted by the editorial factor. Other central characteristics of this region were found to be accounted by the coverage of an outstanding event (political activeness) and by the incongruity between the topic and the content of news (scientific activeness).

Let us discuss the factors that could have determined the representation of the North-West in the news.

4.1.3. The North-West

The only characteristic that was projected through the region's news is low newsworthiness. Thus, the representation of the North-West in the news is solely peripheral.

Let us discuss the possible "objective", production, reception and editorial factors that could account for a low ratio of news on the North-West. The involvement of the "objective" factor would mean that the North-West is home to fewer events in comparison to most regions. If one assumes that the amount of events depends on the size of the population, the "objective" factor can be an explanation. The North-West could be a less event-abundant place in comparison to most regions since after the Far East, it is least populated area (along with the Urals). However, it is questionable whether one can speak of the "objective" factor at all: event-abundance cannot be measured. The effect of the production factor would mean that the North-West's office of RIA Novosti in Saint Petersburg is understaffed and/or has poor production facilities in comparison to most regions. It is difficult to think of Saint Petersburg, the second biggest city in Russia, as a place where staffing and facilities would be an issue. As to the reception factor, it seems to be a more viable explanation for the North-West's low newsworthiness. It could be that the North-West accounts for a relatively small portion of RIA Novosti readership. The editorial stance could also be a factor: Moscow and Saint Petersburg have always been rivals. It is possible that RIA Novosti editors and/or the affiliated groups are not interested in the extensive coverage of the North-West.

It is noteworthy that in contrast to other regions, the North-West did not stand with regard to any of the following centre-periphery categories: positivity-negativity, publicity-anonymity, visibility-invisibility, personification-impersonality and urbanity-rurality. However, the North-West did have opportunities for prominence in the news. First, the region could have stood out due to Saint Petersburg alone, the region's administrative centre. Saint Petersburg is known as the "cultural capital of Russia", i.e. the home to more cultural events than any other city in the country: the city's amount of such events could have increased the ratio of cultural news in the region at large. Yet, in Saint Petersburg news in particular, and in the North-West news, in general, the representation of cultural issues is low. It is unclear what prevented RIA Novosti newsmakers from covering Saint Petersburg's cultural issues more extensively.

Thus, the only characteristic of the North-West, low newsworthiness, was found to be associated with the editorial factor.

Let us now consider what factors could have accounted for the centre-periphery characteristics of Siberia.

4.3.4. Siberia

In the news, Siberia was associated with several periphery features and was context non. Siberia appeared as a periphery due to its projected 1) low newsworthiness, 2) inactivity, 3) neglect of people and 4) rurality. Siberia's central characteristic is visibility (i.e. a higher ratio of pictures).

Let us start with Siberia's low newsworthiness and the "objective", production, reception and editorial factors that could be associated with this characteristic. The "objective" factor would mean that there are fewer events in Siberia in comparison to more regions. If one assumes that the amount of events is a function of the size of the population, Siberia is hardly an event-scarce place since it is quite populated in comparison to most regions. Yet, it should be noted that the "objective" factor is not applicable in this case since 1) event-abundance in real life cannot be measured, and 2) newsmakers can turn any information into an event. Siberia's low newsworthiness could be associated with the production factor: in Siberia, information could be less accessible since it is often difficult to get from one place to another due to the extreme weather conditions and/or underdeveloped transport systems. The reception factor is also a viable explanation. It could be that Siberia accounts for a relatively small portion of IltA Novosti readership. The editorial could be involved as well: it is possible that IltA Novosti editors and/or the affiliated groups are not interested in the extensive coverage of Siberia, for some unknown reason.

Let us continue with Siberia's editorial characteristic as a hazardous place. It could be that hazardness is not a characteristic of Siberia at large, but is associated with just a part of the region, e.g. Siberia's rural places. This assumption is based on the fact that Siberia has a higher ratio of rural places in its news. In other words, Siberia's hazardness could have been brought along by the projected hazardness of rural places. However, a chi-square test of Siberia news without rural places did not confirm this assumption. An alternative explanation for a higher ratio of accidents in Siberia's news is the "outstanding event" factor. The exploration of Siberia' 'accidents' and 'power structures'

news revealed five recurrent themes (the top two are the ecological disaster and the killing of a young child). A series of chi-square tests were performed, to find out if any of these themes and/or a combination of them could have accounted for a higher ratio of accidents in Siberia's news. It turned out that Siberia's ratio of accidents was only affected by the combination of all the five events. Thus, Siberia's projected unsafety is ensured by five outstanding events. Since five events is a sizable number (considering that most regions displayed no outstanding accidents at all), one cannot dismiss Siberia's projected hazardness as due to chance.

Now the task is to discuss the possible objective, production, reception and/or editorial factors that could account for the news makers' decision to focus on them. First, it could be some of these events are "objectively" outstanding, e.g. the killing of a young child is an outrageous crime and would be an outstanding event regardless of the context. The production factor, in particular, the accessibility of sources, could be at play in the case of some of these outstanding news. For instance, much of the information on the YUKOS affair[21] was provided by the defendant's advocate who is, probably, more accessible to the media than the court. The reception factor could be involved as well, in the coverage of the YUKOS affair, for instance. The YUKOS affair is an event that is of interest to the national readership, hence the extensive coverage. The editorial factor cannot be excluded either: the RIA Novosti editors could be influenced by certain stake-holders who are interested in the negative image of Siberia. However, any further speculations on this matter are not warranted within this study since the researcher does not have enough factual data to substantiate this assumption.

Let us proceed to another periphery characteristic of Siberia's coverage, people-neglect. There is a possibility that this projected characteristic does not refer to the region as a whole, but to a part of it. Since Siberia stands out with greater representation of rural places, the latter could have skewed Siberia's ratio of social news. This assumption was tested through another chi-square analysis of news topics in Russia's regions, rural places were removed from Siberia's data. However, Siberia still stood out with a lower ratio of social news. This means that the explanation of Siberia's under-representation of social issues should be looked for elsewhere: there could be objective, production, reception

[21] YUKOS is an oil company prosecuted by the state for the offence of the tax code.

and/or editorial factors involved. First, it could be that Siberia's social policy and/or community life is less active in comparison to other regions. However, the present study does not have any factual data on the regions' social policy activeness and community activeness to substantiate this assumption. (Furthermore, measuring social policy and community activeness is very problematic). Even if there were such statistical data at the disposal, they would not be of any help since news are not an accurate reflection of reality. Another possible explanation for the low ratio of social news in Siberia's coverage is the reception factor. It could be that "social" news are not very popular with Siberia's readers. The production factor could be involved as well. It could be that the providers of 'society' news, - the municipal offices, - are less accessible to the Centre journalists as compared to the providers of other types of information, e.g. the police, the key provider of 'accident' news. Among the factors that could possibly affect the accessibility of social news providers are internet accessibility, staffing, the organization's media policy, etc. Furthermore, the lower representation of social events in Siberia's news could have been influenced by the editorial stance. Social inertness is hardly a desirable characteristic for a region. There could be certain agents who might be interested in the negative image of Siberia: RIA Novosti editors might be representing their perspective. However, this study does not aim at and is not capable of making an argument about RIA Novosti's potential bias against Siberia.

Let us turn to Siberia's projected rurality. This characteristic resulted from a higher representation of rural places vs. urban places (as compared to the representation of rural places in other regions' news). The initial task is to ensure that this characteristic does not result from the "outstanding event" factor. The exploration of Siberia's rural news did not reveal any recurrent events. There should be other factors to account for Siberia's over-representation of rural news: "objective", production-, reception-related and/or editorial. As to the objective factors, it is difficult to think of any characteristics that Siberia's rural places have and other regions' rural places do not. As to the production factors, it could be that Siberia's division has more reporters assigned to rural areas in comparison to other regions' divisions. The higher amount of rural news on Siberia cannot be a matter of high accessibility since Siberia's transport network is not the most developed in Russia. The over-representation of Siberia's rural places could be associated with

reception considerations: it could be that Siberia's rural places account for a higher ratio of the region's total [target] readership than the rural populations of other regions do. The editorial factor is hardly at play in this case: it is very difficult to think of any reasons for Siberia's editors to favor the region's rural places.

Let us continue with Siberia's centre characteristic, visibility which was ensured by a higher ratio of pictures in Siberia's news. Siberia's visibility could have resulted from the "outstanding event" factor, e.g. the focus on an extraordinary event. In the course of the exploration of Siberia's news four such events were identified: an ecological disaster, the court hearings on an oil tycoon who was charged with fraud, an outbreak of food intoxication and the killing of a child. Pictures accompanying the news stories on these events could have increased Siberia's ratio of pictured news. This assumption was tested through a chi-square analysis; the pictures illustrating these four outstanding events were removed from Siberia's data. However, Siberia's result did not change: Siberia still stood out with a higher ratio of pictures. This means that Siberia's higher visibility in the news is not a result of chance.

The task is to discuss the possible objective, reception, production and editorial factors that could have led news makers working on Siberia to attach pictures to Siberia's news more frequently. As to the objective factor, it is hardly applicable to the ratio of pictures. The presence/absence of a picture next to the news story does not depend on reality at all. As to the reception factor, it does not seem to be a viable explanation either unless one assumes that Siberia's readers prefer a large amount of pictures in the news. As to the editorial stance, it is hardly a factor in Siberia's visibility. Since visibility is a positive characteristic, the assumption that Siberia's coverage is determined by Novosti editorial stance suggests the editors' positive bias towards Siberia. This is in contradiction with other characteristics of Siberia's coverage, hazardness and neglect of people. The production factor has a better potential to account for Siberia's higher ratio of pictures. It could be that the ratio of pictures mostly depends on material constraints, such as the amount of news and the amount of space on the website. The amount of news on Siberia is not very large, so the space taken by Siberia's news on the website is not large either. That could have given RIA Novosti news makers attach pictures to the news stories more liberally.

It is important to consider whether visibility is a positive or negative feature in Siberia's case. Visibility is "originally" a centre/positive features since it makes a region more prominent. However, one should take into account what kind of news a pictures accompanies. For instance, if an image is attached to a news story on an accident, it would serve to enhance negativity, and therefore be a negative/peripheral feature. Siberia's visibility could be associated primarily with accidents news, considering that Siberia stands out with a higher ratio of 'accidents'. However, a chi-square test for the picture presence-absence with no 'accidents' in Siberia's data did not confirm this assumption: Siberia still showed a higher ratio of pictures in its news. Thus, Siberia's higher visibility is a positive/central characteristic.

Thus, one of Siberia's peripheral characteristics (low newsworthiness) could be associated with the reception or editorial factors, or both. The remaining negative characteristics of the region (hazardness, neglect of people and rurality) were difficult to account for. Siberia's only central characteristic (visibility) seems to be related to the production factor.

Let us discuss the factors that could have affected the South's representation in the news.

4.15. The South

In the news, the South appeared as a periphery rather than a centre. The South's peripheral characteristics are 1) low newsworthiness; 2) unsafety; 3) neglect of people; and 4) economic inertness. The region's centre characteristic is publicity.

Let us start with the South's low newsworthiness. It could be that the region is "objectively" home to fewer events in comparison to other regions. If one assumes a direct link between the amount of events and the size of the population, the "objective" factor can be considered as an explanation of the South's low newsworthiness since the South, indeed, is not a very populated place. However, the projected event-abundance cannot be juxtaposed to the real-life abundance simply because real-life event-abundance cannot be measured. The South's low newsworthiness could be accounted for by the

production factor: it could be the Southern office of RIA Novosti is understaffed which is often the case with distant offices. The reception factor seems to be a viable explanation as well: it could be the South accounts for a relatively small portion of RIA Novosti readership. The editorial factor cannot be excluded: it is possible that for some unknown reason, RIA Novosti editors and/or the affiliated groups are not interested in the extensive coverage of the South.

Let us turn to the South's projected people-neglect. It could be that the "neglect of people" is a characteristic of one particular place in the South, rather than of the whole region. The exploration of the South's news revealed that a large portion of them comes from the Caucasus republics, such as Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, etc. These are the troubled areas of Russia where safety issues currently come first and social policies come second. It could be that the projected image of the South as a whole was affected by the Caucasus news. In order to verify this assumption, another chi-square test for topics was done, the Caucasus republics were excluded from the South's data. However, the removal of the Caucasus republics did not change the outcome of the test. The South still showed lower representation of social issues. Thus, "people-neglect" is a characteristic of the region's coverage. The under-representation of social issues in the South's news could be due to the objective, production, reception and/or editorial factors. A detailed discussion of these factors with regard to the projected people-neglect can be found above, in the subsection on Siberia.

Let us proceed to the South's projected hazardness. It could be that hazardness is not a characteristic of the South at large, but is associated with just a part of the region, e.g. the Caucasus republics. The Caucasus republics are notorious for armed conflicts, kidnappings, attacks on the police, etc: this gives one a reason to think that the South's projected hazardness could be ensured by the Caucasus areas, more so that the Caucasus republics account for a large portion of the region's news. In order to verify this assumption, another chi-square for news topics was run; the Caucasus republics were excluded from the data. However, the South's result did not change: the South still exhibited a higher ratio of 'accidents' and 'power structures'. This means that in the news, lower safety is a characteristic of the Southern region in general.

The next question to answer is whether this characteristic is "chance", i.e. due to few outstanding events.[22]

The exploration of the South's news revealed eight recurrent themes (e.g. a major infrastructure collapse in the future capital of 2014 Olympic Games, court hearings on the killing of civilians during the Chechen War, etc). In order to find if these outstanding events account for a higher ratio of accidents in the South's news, a series of chi-square test were performed. When taken individually, the themes had no effect on the South's result. Only when treated as a whole, they skewed the ratio of accidents in the South's news: without these themes, the South no longer stood out with a higher representation of accidents. Since eight outstanding accidents is a large number (considering that most regions exhibited none), the South's projected hazardness cannot be dismissed as chance.

Now the task is to discuss the objective, reception, production and editorial factors that could possibly account for the crucial role of the outstanding events in the South's projected hazardness. First, some of these events could be "objectively" outstanding: killings of high-ranking officials do not happen very often. It seems that the South will continue to be a source of "objectively outstanding accidents" until the situation around Chechnya is not completely resolved. As to the production constraints, it is hardly a factor in the case of the aforementioned outstanding news: the source of the outstanding 'accident' news is the same as the source of regular 'accidents' news, police. The reception factor seems to be more potent to account for the coverage of the South's outstanding accidents, especially some of them, e.g. a major infrastructure collapse in the future capital of 2014 Olympic Games, Sochi. The extensive coverage of this event seems to be due to the fact that the forthcoming Olympic Games are an event that is of interest to the national readership. The reception factor could be involved in the coverage of accidents related to Chechnya and other Caucasus republics: the readership is used to perceive the Caucasus area within a certain frame, i.e. as a troubled area. The editorial stance as a factor accounting for the South's focus on outstanding accidents cannot be excluded either: the RIA Novosti editors could be influenced by certain stake-holders who are interested in the negative image of the South. However, any further speculations

[22] The outstanding nature of an event is indicated by the fact that it generates a large amount of news stories.

on this matter are not warranted within this study since the researcher does not have enough factual data to substantiate this assumption.

Let us proceed to another peripheral characteristic of the South projected through the region's coverage: the economic inertness. This characteristic resulted from a lower ratio of economic news in the South. It could be that the projected economic inertness is a characteristic of a certain part of the South, rather than of the whole region. The areas that could have ensured the lower ratio of economic news in the South's coverage could be the Caucasus republics considering that they are not industrially developed. This idea seems to be more viable considering that the Caucasus republics account for a sizable portion of the South's news. In order to verify this assumption, another chi-square test for topics was done, the Caucasus republics were removed from the South's data. The removal of the Caucasus republics from the South's news did affect the outcome: the South no longer stood out with a lower ratio of economics news. Thus, the lower representation of economic issues in the South's news is associated with the Caucasus republics and the economic inertness is actually a characteristic of the Caucasus republics.

There could be objective, production, reception and editorial factors to account for a lower representation of economic issues in the coverage of the Caucasus republics. The objective factor to account for a lower coverage of economic issues in connection with the Caucasus republics is that these areas are mostly rural whereas RIA Novosti 'economics' news are on industries. The reception factor seems to be a viable explanation. As was pointed out earlier, the reader is used to have the Caucasus republics to be extensively covered in connection with negative news and the news makers just present these areas within the frame to which the reader is already accustomed. The editorial stance as a factor to account for the South's focus on outstanding accidents cannot be excluded either: the RIA Novosti editors could be influenced by certain stake-holders who are not interested in the image of the Caucasus republics as economically active areas. However, any further speculations on this matter are not warranted within this study since the researcher does not have enough factual data to substantiate this assumption.

Let us now consider the South's central characteristic, publicity which resulted from a higher ratio of publicized agents in the region's news. Publicity of agents indicates that the agents are important. The projected importance of the South's agents could be associated with the South's outstanding events. (These included nine recurrent themes: eight "outstanding accidents" and the presidential election in Chechnya). In order to test this assumption, a chi-square test for the agents' publicity was performed on the South's news without the outstanding news. However, the South's results with regard to publicity remained unchanged even after the removal of the outstanding news. Thus, publicity as a projected characteristic of the South is not a chance. The task is to find out whether publicity refers to the South at large, or only to (a) certain part(s) of the region. Theoretically, the coverage of the South, including the aspect of publicity/anonymity, could have been affected by the Caucasus republics, since the latter account for a sizable portion of the South's news. In order to verify this assumption, a chi-square test was performed on the South's news without the news on the Caucasus republics. The test showed that without the Caucasus republics the South is *not* different from most regions. This means that publicity as a projected characteristic refers to the Caucasus republics, not to the South as a whole.

Furthermore, it is necessary to consider if the Caucasus' publicity is actually a positive characteristic. The positive nature of this characteristic would be negated if it were associated with "bad" news, i.e. 'accidents' and 'power structures'. The chi-square test of the Caucasus' data without negative news showed that without "bad" news, the Caucasus is not different from other areas of Russia. Thus, the publicity of the Caucasus agents is a negative characteristic.

Let us discuss the objective, production, reception and editorial factors that could possibly account for the Caucasus's publicity. First, the higher ratio of publicized agents could be a reflection of the objective situation in the Caucasus. As was pointed out above, the Caucasus's publicized agents proved to be associated mostly with 'accident' news, i.e. important people appeared to be associated with negative events. It could be that in the Caucasus, "important" people are involved in accidents far more often than in the South in general, or in any other region of Russia. This assumption is not a mere speculation. The current situation in the Caucasus is very unstable: the Chechen militants

are still active in the Caucasus republics, "important" people (e.g., local government officials) often become victims of their attacks. As to the production factor, it is difficult to think of any material constraints or stimuli that could possibly affect for the ratio of publicized agents. One of the factors that has a potential to account for the ratio of publicized agents in the Caucasus's news is reception-related. Probably, the Caucasus "important" people are not involved in accidents more often than in other areas of Russia. It could be that newsmakers deliberately create a greater focus on "important" people as participants/victims of accidents because this is in accordance with the reception frame on the Caucasus coverage. The public has long been accustomed to the media image of the Caucasus as the main source of sensational crimes involving authorities. The editorial factor cannot be excluded either. The editorial stance on the Caucasus coverage could be influenced by certain stake-holders who would benefit from the Caucasus image as the scene/source of instability. The federal government might be such stake-holder: the Caucasus image as the scene/source of instability might be beneficial to the federal government since it would justify the military presence in the Caucasus and help prevent the separatist sentiment in the area.

Thus, the South's low newsworthiness can be accounted for either by the reception, or the editorial factors, or both. The South's projected hazardness and neglect of people seem to be associated with the editorial factor. The region's projected economic inertness was found to refer to the Caucasus and to be related to the objective situation in the area. The South's only central characteristic (publicity) was found to refer to the Caucasus and proved to be a negative characteristic since it was associated with 'accidents' news. It was difficult to single out a factor to account for the Caucasus' negative publicity.

Let us discuss the centre-periphery characteristics of the Urals with regard to the factors that could have accounted for them.

4.1.6. The Urals

In the news, the Urals was only associated with one periphery characteristic, low newsworthiness and one central characteristic, personification which resulted from a higher ratio of human images.

Let us first consider the Urals' low newsworthiness. One of the factors to account for this characteristic is the "objective" one. Possibly, the Urals is home to fewer events in comparison to other regions since after the Far East, it is the least populated region (along with the North-West). However, this explanation is viable only if one assumes that event-abundance is a function of the population size. This link is very questionable since event-abundance is a news category: in the news, anything can be presented as an event. Thus, the applicability of the "objective" factor in this case is doubtful. The Urals' low newsworthiness could be associated with the production factor: there could be fewer journalists/reporters in the Urals' office of RIA Novosti. The reception factor also has a potential to account for the region's low newsworthiness. It could be that the Urals' readers account for a relatively small portion of RIA Novosti total readership. The editorial factor is another viable explanation: it is possible that for some unknown reason, RIA Novosti editors and/or the affiliated groups are not interested in the extensive coverage of the Urals.

The other characteristic of the Urals to consider is personification which resulted from a higher ratio of human images. The primary task is to check whether or not the Urals' personification is a chance characteristic that is linked to some outstanding news. However, no outstanding (i.e. recurrent) news were found in the Urals' coverage. Thus, personification is a "stable" characteristic of the Urals's coverage that could have resulted from some objective, reception, production or editorial factors. As to the objective factor, it is difficult to think of the Urals as a region whose agents are more important and therefore, should "deserve" a picture in the news. Furthermore, in the news, importance as a category projected through the attachment of an image (especially, a human image), or in other ways, is subjective: anything and anybody can be positioned by news makers as important. Thus, the objective factor is not applicable to personification altogether. The reception factor does not seem to be viable either. It is difficult to think of the Urals readership as a specific type of the readership who prefer news with a great amount of human images. As to the production factor, it is difficult to think of any material constraints or stimuli that would lead news makers to choose a human image over other image types when attaching a picture to the text. The editorial factor cannot be excluded: if the editors believe that a higher ratio of human images would improve the region's

image, the Urals's personification might be associated with the editors' favourable stance toward the Urals.

Thus, the Urals' peripheral characteristic (low newsworthiness) seems to be associated either with the reception, or the editorial factors, or both. The region's central characteristic (personification) was difficult to account for.

The last region to consider in the discussion of the factors accounting for the regions' centre-periphery characteristics is the Volga.

4.1.7. The Volga

In the news, the Volga was associated with both central and peripheral characteristics. The Volga's central characteristic is visibility. Its peripheral characteristics are 1) low newsworthiness; and 2) impersonality.

Let us begin with the Volga' low newsworthiness. The involvement of the "objective" factor would mean that the Volga is home to fewer events. However, it is difficult to think of the Volga region as an event-scarce place since the region is comparable to the Centre with regard to the population size. Yet, it is questionable whether the amount of events is a function of the population size. Therefore, the applicability of the "objective" factor for the explanation of the Volga's low newsworthiness is also questionable. The production factor does not seem to be a viable explanation either. The Volga office of RIA Novosti is based in Nizhii Novgorod, an economically and culturally developed city. It is difficult to think of Nizhii Novgorod as a city where RIA Novosti could have difficulties in finding qualified staff. It is also difficult to assume/presume that information is not easily accessible in this region: the Volga has a well-developed transport system. The reception factor has a higher potential to account for the region's low newsworthiness: it could be that the Volga accounts for a relatively small portion of RIA Novosti readership. The editorial factor could be involved as well: it is possible that for some unknown reason, RIA Novosti editors and/or the affiliated groups are not interested in the extensive coverage of the Volga.

Let us proceed to another peripheral characteristic of the Volga, impersonality which resulted from a lower ratio of human images in the region's news. Impersonality can be

considered as a peripheral characteristic since, first, the absence of a human picture suggests that the agent is not important enough to be pictured; and second, the absence of a human picture, probably, reduces the noticing and remembering of the information by the reader. Let us consider the objective, reception, production, or editorial factors that could account for the Volga's projected impersonality/unimportance of agents. To assume that the characteristic in question is accounted for by the objective factor is to assume that the Volga's agents are "objectively" less important (in comparison to other regions). However, importance/unimportance is a very subjective category: anybody and anything can be presented by the news makers as important. Thus, the objective factor is hardly applicable to the ratio of human images. As to the production factor, it does not seem to be viable either: it is difficult to think of any material constraints that would prevent the RIA Novosti newsmakers from using a human image. As to the reception factor, the lower ratio of human pictures could hardly be a matter of the Volga readership's preferences. The editorial factor might be involved. Theoretically, the lower ratio of human images could follow from the editors' negative bias towards the Volga. However, this is not in accordance with the Volga's visibility which is a positive, central feature.

There is an alternative explanation for the Volga's impersonality. Further exploration of the Volga's news revealed that they cover economics more extensively in comparison to other regions. The Volga's lower ratio of human images could be a by-product of the economics focus. There is a reason to believe that economics news and news without human images overlap: economics is about figures, rather than living people. A chi-square test without 'economics' in the Volga's data confirmed this assumption: without 'economics', the Volga was not different from most regions with regard to human images. Thus, the lack of human images in the news on the Volga could be a by-product of another circumstance, a greater focus on economics. In other words, the Volga's impersonality could be justified by the projected economic activity. Since economic activeness is a positive, central feature, then the associated impersonality of the Volga's coverage should not be considered as a negative, periphery characteristic.

Let us proceed to the Volga's central characteristic, visibility which was ensured by a higher ratio of pictures in the news. The primary task is to find out if this characteristic is

"chance", i.e. whether it is associated with some outstanding news on the Volga. However, the exploration of the Volga's news did not reveal any outstanding events. Thus, visibility is a "stable" characteristic of the Volga's coverage. Let us discuss possible objective, reception, production and editorial factors that could account for a higher ratio of pictures in the Volga's news. The objective factor is ruled out from the discussion since the presence/absence of a picture next to the news story does not depend on reality at all, but on the news makers' subjective opinion on what is important or not. The reception factor is also hardly viable unless one assumes that the Volga's readership is a special type of readership that prefers a large amount of pictures in the news. The production factor has a better potential to account for the Volga's higher ratio of pictures. The ratio of pictures certainly depends on material constraints, such as the amount of news and the amount of space on the website. The amount of news on the Volga is the smallest among the regions, so the space taken by the Volga's news on the website is also small. That could have given RIA Novosti news makers an opportunity to attach pictures to the news stories more liberally. The editorial factor should not be excluded. The Volga's higher ratio of pictures might have resulted from the editorial favourable bias towards the Volga provided the editors believe that visibility helps make the region more prominent.

Thus, one of the Volga's peripheral features, low newsworthiness, could be accounted by the reception, or the editorial factor, or both; the other, impersonality, was found to be accounted by coverage of economic news. The Volga's central characteristic, visibility, seems to be related to the production factor.

4.2. The re-assessed centre-periphery characteristics of Russia's regions

The investigation of the possible factors that could have accounted for the regions' representation in the news has allowed for identifying which of the regions' centre/periphery characteristics are "justified" and which are not. These new findings call for the re-assessment of the region's centrality-peripherality indexes. Table 19 below contains the summary of the factors that seem to have accounted for the regions'

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [

					Centre: +2.75
Far East					
the region is important	overall amount of news	+1	editorial	+1	
the region is people-oriented	more 'society' news	+0.15	editorial: misclassification of events	+0.15	
the region is politically active	more 'politics' news	+0.15	outstanding event	0	
the region is scientifically active	more 'science and technology' news	+0.15	other: topic ≠ content	0	
the region is not home to many hazards	less 'accidents' and 'power structures" news	+1	editorial: misclassification of events	+1	
					Far East: +2.35
North-West					
the region is not important	overall amount of news	-0.5	reception editorial	-0.5	
					North-West: -0.5
Siberia					
the region is not important	overall amount of news	-1	reception editorial	-1	
the regions is not people-oriented	less 'society' news	-1	unknown	-1	
the region is	more	-1	unknown	-1	

home to many hazards	'accidents' and 'power structures" news				
the region's events are important	more pictured news	+1	production	0	
the region is more rural	more news on rural places	-0.75	unknown	-0.75	
					Siberia: -3.75
South					
the region is not important	overall amount of news	-0.5	reception editorial	-0.5	
the region is not people-oriented	less 'society' news	-1.5	editorial	-1.5	
the region is not economically active	less 'economics' news		refers to the Caucasus republics: objective		
the region is home to many hazards	more 'accidents' and 'power structures" news	-1.5	editorial	-1.5	
the region's agents are important	more publicized agents	+1.5	refers to the Caucasus republics: objective reception editorial	-1.5	
					South: - 3.5
Urals					
the region is	overall amount	-1	reception	-1	

not important	of news		editorial		
the region's agents are important	more human images	+1	unknown	+1	
					Urals: 0
Volga					
the region is not important	overall amount of news	-1.5	reception editorial	-1.5	
the region's events are important	more pictured news	+1	production	0	
the region's agents are not important	less human images	-0.5	other: refers to 'economics' news	0	
					Volga: - 1.5

4.2.1. The Centre

In RIA Novosti news, the Centre exhibited central as well as peripheral characteristics. The central characteristics are: 1) high newsworthiness; 2) people-orientedness; 3) safety; and 4) urbanity. All positive characteristics of the Centre proved to be associated with the predominance of Moscow in the region's news.

As to Moscow's projected high newsworthiness, all types of factors could account for this characteristic: objective, reception, production and editorial. Moscow is a 10 million metropolis where events are happening all the time. In Moscow, information is more accessible due to the extensive use of internet (the capital is the most advanced area with regard to internet accessibility). RIA Novosti office in Moscow is, most likely, better staffed in comparison to any other office of the news agency in the country.

Such characteristics of Moscow as people-orientedness and safety seem to have resulted from the city's objective situation (Moscow is a rich city that is capable of

ensuring a high standard of social services and safety) and/or the editorial stance. Among the possible stake-holders who would be interested in a positive image of Moscow are the government of Moscow and the federal government.

The Centre's projected urbanity was found to refer to Moscow. The Central news focus on one particular city, Moscow, not on cities in general.

The peripheral characteristics of the Centre are invisibility and anonymity. Invisibility (a lower ratio of pictures) seems to have been ensured by a production factor: the great amount of news that require news makers to save space on the website. In other words, invisibility seems to be a by-product of the great amount of news on the region (projected importance), and therefore can be written off. The Centre's projected anonymity was difficult to account for.

The discussion of the Centre's projected characteristics lead to the re-assessment of the Centre's centre-periphery characteristics: the region's centre-periphery index rose from +1.25 to + 2.75.

4.2.2. The Far East

In the news, the Far East appeared both as a centre and a periphery. The region's central characteristics are the following: 1) high newsworthiness; 1) people-orientedness; 2) safety; 3) political activeness; and 4) scientific activeness.

The Far East's high newsworthiness was found to be associated with the editorial factor since all other factors could not explain why a distant region and a small population appears to be an event-abundant place.

The Far East's projected people-orientedness and safety proved to result from the editorial factor, i.e. the intentional misclassification of events by the newsmakers (a great portion of 'accidents events appears under the heading 'society'). A high crime rate and a high incident of natural and technical accidents is the region's objective reality. One of the possible stake-holders to be interested in the amelioration of the region's negative image is the regional government. However, it is unclear why RIA Novosti editors would serve the interests of the Far East's elites.

The Far East's political activeness as a centre characteristic was dismissed since it was found to be associated with outstanding events. Scientific activeness was also written off since the content of the Far East's 'science and technology' news stories (on encounters with Amur tigers) did not match the heading.

In the course of re-assessing the Far East's results, the region's centre-periphery index dropped only slightly: from + 2.5 to + 2.35.

4.2.3. The North-West

In the news, the North-West exhibited only one, periphery characteristic which is low newsworthiness. Similar to the low newsworthiness of most provincial regions, this characteristic of the North-West could be associated with the reception considerations and/or the editorial stance. Since the North-West is rather thinly populated, it could be that it does not account for a large portion of RIA Novosti readership. However, the editorial stance in the case of the North-West could have a different meaning. Since Moscow and Saint-Petersburg (the centre of the North-West) are rivals, RIA Novosti editors could have a special interest in a low coverage of this region.

The discussion of the factors to account for the North-West's results did not affect its initial centre-periphery index (-0.5).

4.2.4. Siberia

In the news, Siberia was associated with several periphery features and one central one. Siberia appeared as a periphery due to its projected 1) low newsworthiness; 2) hazardness; 3) neglect of people and 4) rurality.

As to Siberia's low newsworthiness, the two most viable factors to account for this characteristic seem to be the reception and the editorial stance. It is possible that Siberia does not account for a large portion of RIA Novosti readership to be covered extensively. It could be that RIA Novosti editors as representatives of the Centre are not interested in Siberia's issues.

As to Siberia's projected hazardness and neglect of people, it was difficult to account for this characteristic: neither of the factors (objective, production, reception and editorial) was deemed to be more viable than the other. The same applies to the region's projected rurality.

Siberia's only central characteristic in the news is visibility (a higher ratio of pictures) suggesting that the region's events are important. However, Siberia's visibility seems to be accounted for by the production factor, i.e. the opportunity to attach more pictures due to the fact that the region's amount of news is not great. Thus, this characteristic proved to be irrelevant.

The re-assessment of Siberia's results led to the change of the region's centre-periphery index: from -2.75 to -3.75.

4.2.5. The South

In the news, the South appeared as a periphery rather than a centre. The South's peripheral characteristics are 1) low newsworthiness; 2) unsafety; 3) neglect of people; and 4) economic inertness.

The South's low newsworthiness was found to be associated with the reception factor and/or the editorial stance, as was the case with Siberia's low newsworthiness.

As to the South's hazardness and people-neglect, none of the factors in question (objective, production, reception and editorial) seems to be more viable explanation than the other. However, there is some ground to hypothesize that these characteristics could have resulted from the editorial stance. One of the stake-holders to be interested in the negative image of the South is the federal government: a media image of the South as a socially deprived and unsafe region would justify the government's social and safety policies with regard to the South.

The South's projected economic inertness was found to be ensured by the Caucasus's coverage. The most viable explanation for this characteristic seems to be the objective situation in the area: the Caucasus is not an industrially developed area.

The South's central characteristic is the agents' publicity (a higher ratio of publicized agents) suggesting that the South's agents are important. A closer investigation of the South's news with publicized agents revealed that this characteristic was ensured by the Caucasus's news. In their turn, most of the Caucasus' publicized agents proved to appear in the news on accidents. Thus, the South's publicity ensured by the Caucasus' 'accidents' news proved a negative characteristic. As to the Caucasus' [negative] publicity, many factors seem to have a potential to account for this characteristic. It could be that in the Caucasus, "important" agents actually get involved in accidents more often than "important" agents in other regions (considering the Caucasus' instability). It could be that the Caucasus' negative publicity reflects the reception frame on the area: the reader is used to the negative representation of the Caucasus the news. From this perspective, RIA Novosti simply informs the readership on the issues which they want to know. Furthermore, there could be certain stake-holders to be interested in the negative image of the Caucasus, e.g. the federal government: a media image of the Caucasus as an unstable region would justify the government's military presence in the area and in the region.

As a result of re-assessing the South's results, the region's centre-periphery index dropped from -2 to -3.5.

4.2.6. The Urals

In the news, the Urals exhibited one, central characteristic, personification (a higher ratio of human images) and one peripheral characteristic, low newsworthiness.

As to the Urals' low newsworthiness, it could be accounted by the same factors as the low newsworthiness of other provincial regions (excluding the Far East), i.e. the low ratio of the region in RIA Novosti news and/or the absence of interest in RIA Novosti editors to a region other than the Centre.

The Urals' personification was difficult to account for: none of the factors was found to be applicable.

Thus, the consideration of the Urals' results with regard to the context did not change the region's original centre-periphery index (0).

4.2.7. The Volga

In the news, the Volga appeared both as a centre and a periphery. The Volga's central characteristic is visibility (a higher ratio of pictures). Production considerations seem to be the most potent factor to account for this characteristic. Since the Volga's amount of news is the smallest among the regions, the newsmakers could have used the opportunity to fill the extra space on the website. Thus, this characteristic was dismissed.

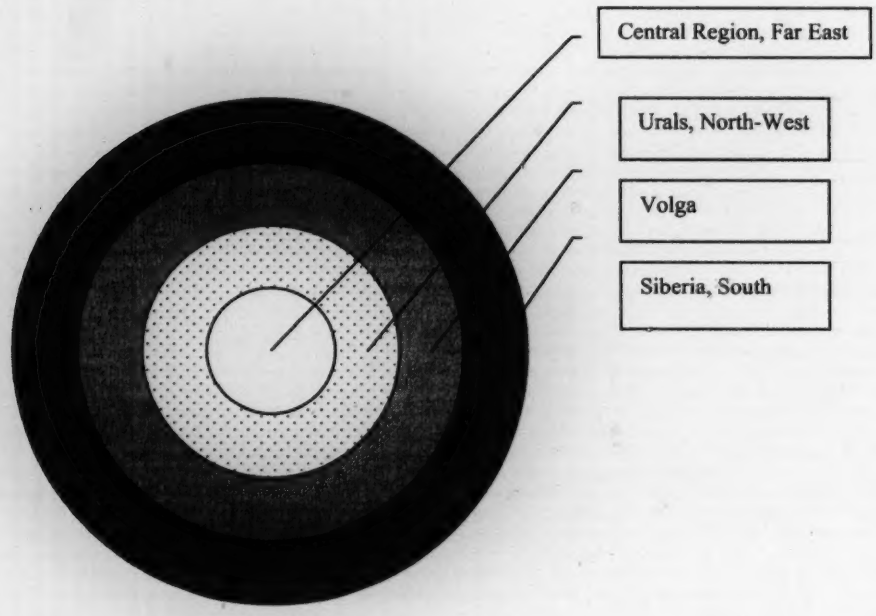
The Volga's peripheral characteristic is impersonality (a lower ratio of human images) communicating the idea that the region's agents are not important. The characteristic was found to be a by-product of the higher representation of economics issues in the region's news. Since the higher representation of economics issues is a positive feature, one cannot consider the Volga's impersonality as a negative characteristic.

As a result of re-assessing the Volga's results, the region's centre-periphery index dropped from -1 to -1.5.

4.3. Final results: Russia's centres and peripheries

Now that the revised centrality-peripherality indexes of the regions are obtained, one can have a more accurate idea of Russia's "centres" and peripheries. Figure 1 below, "Russia's regions: 'centres' and 'peripheries'", is a graphical representation of the region's positions on the centre-periphery axis:

Figure 1: Russia's centres and peripheries



Judging by the positions of the regions on the centrality-peripherality circle (see Figure 1 above), the regions form a strong centre, a weak periphery, a moderate periphery and a strong periphery. The Centre and the Far East constitute the strong centre. The Volga region is the moderate periphery; the Urals region and the North-West are the weak periphery. The South and Siberia are the strong periphery.

These findings can be juxtaposed to the hypotheses put forward in the beginning of the study.

Hypothesis # 1: in the news, the Central region will be represented in the most positive light.

This hypothesis was confirmed by the results on the Centre. The Centre, indeed, was mostly associated in the news with central characteristics. Though the region did exhibit some peripheral characteristics as well, its central characteristics prevailed. Furthermore, the Centre scored the highest centrality index among the regions.

Hypothesis # 2: Moscow will account for the most of the positive image of the Central region.

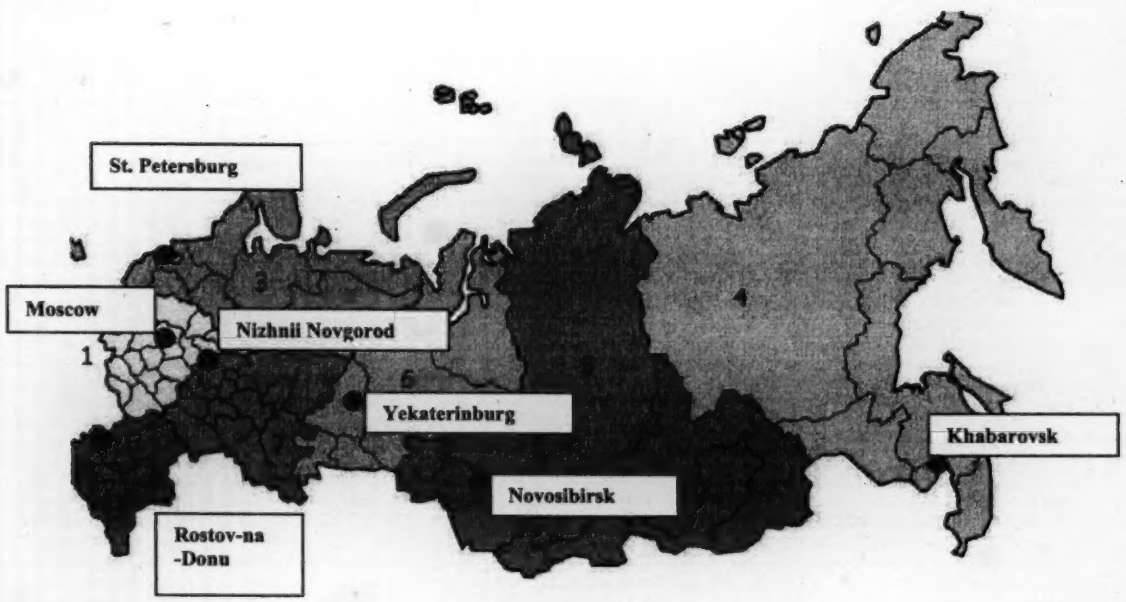
This hypothesis was confirmed. All central characteristics identified in the Central region's coverage pertain to Moscow. Without Moscow, the Central region would not be different from the provincial regions. This finding resonates with the rhetoric that the centre-periphery dichotomy in Russia is about Moscow vs. the rest of Russia, rather than the Central region vs. the provincial regions.

Hypothesis # 3: in the news, the provincial regions will be represented mostly in the negative light, i.e. as the periphery.

Most "provincial" regions, especially, the South and Siberia, are represented in the news as peripheries. Furthermore, the North-West is the only region that stays in the grey area: it never exhibited any deviations from the "average" with regards to positivity/negativity, visibility/invisiblity, the importance/unimportance of agents, etc. qualitative characteristics. The North-West is an average Russian region.

The finding on the Far East contradicted hypothesis # 3. The Far East appeared in the news as a centre and is very close to the Central region in its degree of centrality. It is interesting that the farthest region of Russia, as the name itself suggests, appeared as the second centre (see Figure 2 below).

Figure 2: Russia's federal regions[23]



1- the Centre

2- the South

3- the North-West

4- the Far East

5- Siberia

6- the Urals

7- the Volga

[23] Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Federal_districts_of_Russia.png

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

The study explored the coverage of Russia's regions in RIA Novosti with regard to their projected centre-periphery characteristics. The purpose of the study was to find out whether the centre-periphery divide among Russia's regions is reflected in the news and whether the role of the centre is played by the Central region (including Moscow) and the role of the periphery is played by the provincial regions. The theoretical basis of the study is the concept of centrality/peripherality that is implicit in Avraham's studies of Israeli's centre-periphery (Avraham, 2002, 2006). Based on Avraham's findings, the researcher suggested that importance/unimportance and positivity/negativity are the key features of cenrality/peripherality. The ideas of importance/unimportance and positivity/negativity are the primary sources of the centre-periphery inferences in this study. The researcher analyzed several aspects of the news coverage that were found relevant to the projection of centrality-peripherality. In particular, inferences about importance/unimportance were drawn from a region's ratio in the total amount of news, the ratio of publicized agents, the ratio of pictured news, the ratio of pictured agents (=the ratio of human images). The categories based on importance were the general importance/unimportance, visibility/invisibility, the agents' publicity/anonymity and the agents' personification/impersonality.

Inferences about positivity/negativity were made on the basis of the ratio of "good" news vs. "bad" news. Since "good" news comprise a number of various topics ('society', 'economics', 'politics', 'culture' and 'science and technology'), the category of positivity was further subdivided into people-orientedness/people-neglect, economical activeness/inertness, political activeness/inertness, cultural activeness/inertness and scientific activeness/inertness.

The complimentary source of the centre-periphery inferences in this study was urbanity/rurality. Urbanity/rurality is encoded in the ratio of news on urban places vs. the news on rural places.

The study was based on the quantitative analysis of the news features. The centre-periphery inferences about the regions were made on the basis of their correlation with the aforementioned centre-periphery characteristics. A region was characterized as a

centre if it exhibited a positive correlation with a positive feature and a negative correlation with a negative feature. A region was characterized as a periphery if it was positively correlated with a negative feature and negatively correlated with a positive feature.

The regions were then compared to one another with regard to the degree of centrality/peripherality projected through their coverage. The degree of centrality/peripherality was assessed on the basis of the number of a region's correlations with centre/periphery characteristics, the strength of the correlations and the importance of the characteristics. The quantitative analysis of the regions' projected characteristics yielded the following results. In the news, the Far East and the Centre appeared as strong centres; the Volga, the North-West and the Urals appeared to be weak peripheries; and the South and Siberia were represented as strong peripheries.

The regions' results were then scrutinized with regard to the various factors that are involved in the process of news making, such as the "objective" reality, the readership's preferences, production constraints and the editorial stance. The discussion of the aforementioned factors led to the re-consideration of the regions' characteristics and to the re-assessment of the regions' centre-periphery rating. The regions took the following positions on the centre-periphery axis: the Centre and the Far East were represented as strong centres; the Urals and the North-West were represented as weak peripheries (or the borderline between the centre and the periphery), the Volga was portrayed as a moderate periphery; and the South and Siberia appeared as strong peripheries.

The hypothesis about the Central region as the "true centre" was confirmed: the Central Region, indeed, appeared in the news in the most positive light. The hypothesis about Moscow as the "guarantor" of the Centre's positive representation was also confirmed: all positive characteristics of the region were ensured by the coverage of the capital. The hypothesis about all provincial regions as the periphery was confirmed only in part: though the South, Siberia, the Volga and the North-West were presented in the news as peripheries, the Far East appeared in the news in a positive light, as opposite to the expected.

The key implications that can be drawn from the study of the regions' coverage in RIA Novosti news are as follows. The centre-periphery dichotomy is not of the black-and-

white quality where the Central Region would be the unchallenged and unrivalled centre and the provincial regions would be the periphery. Rather, one can see the centre-periphery hierarchy with two "centres" (the Central region and the Far East), the "grey area" (comprising the Urals and the North-West), the moderate periphery (the Volga) and the "core" periphery (the South and Siberia). Thus, the findings of the study suggest that Russia's periphery is not homogeneous. Yet, the crucial implication of the study is that most provincial regions are represented in the negative light. This finding is consistent with the previous research on the representation of the centre and the periphery in national media, in particular, with Avraham's studies of Israeli's centre-periphery divide (Avraham, 2002, 2006). According to Avraham's research, Israeli's national newspapers also represent the geographic areas other than the capital in the negative light. Linking the findings of the present study, as well as those obtained by Avraham, with Shil's conception of the centre-periphery power relations (1975), one could suggest that the centre's perspective of the periphery as negative and/or unimportant could be indicative of the centre's efforts to control the periphery so as to maintain the existing power relationship.

Another important finding of the present study is that the Central Region "owes" its central representation to Moscow: without Moscow, the Central Region would not be different from other provincial regions. In this respect, the present research supports the "the capital vs. *provintsiia*" paradigm which constitutes the traditional approach to studying Russia's centre-periphery divide exercised in such disciplines as philology and sociology. The findings of the present study appear in a new light when considered in the context of these disciplines. As philological studies of Russia's centre-periphery divide show, the Russian classic literature constructs a negligible image of the Russian *provintsiia* (Ertner, 2005; Domanskii, 1998). The similar portrayal of Russia's periphery in contemporary national media is indicative of the continuity of the cultural dichotomy of the capital vs. *provintsiia*. The latter idea can be linked to the sociological research on the capital-*provintsiia* divide. As the recent sociological studies demonstrate, the capital residents and the *provintsiia* residents hold negative attitudes toward each other (Petukhov, 2006). It would be interesting to know if *provintsiia*'s frustration with the capital is related by the current representation of *provintsiia* by national media (as well as

its image in the Russian classic literature). This question deserves a separate ethnographic study.

The present study was preoccupied with only one centre-periphery axis: the regions' centre-periphery hierarchy as an alternative to the traditional "the capital vs. *provintsiia*" dichotomy. The investigation of other centre-periphery axes is the task for future studies on Russia's centre-periphery divide. One of the interesting alternatives to explore is Rakov's centre-periphery hierarchy of the capital vs. bigger cities vs. towns vs. villages (Rakov, 2003).

It has to be noted that the study has a number of limitations. First, the centre-periphery inferences about Russia's regions were drawn from one source, RIA Novosti news. Though RIA Novosti is the most referred-to news agency in Russia (which testifies to its great potential in disseminating its perspective), it still represents only one perspective on Russia's centres and peripheries. Furthermore, internet news sites are not the most popular source of news for the general public. For the majority of Russia's population, the key source of domestic news is television. Further research on Russia's centres and peripheries should tackle television news.

Another limitation of the study is that the centre-periphery inferences were based on the news for only three months. The results could have been more accurate if the time frame were extended to a longer period.

It is hoped that the subsequent media studies of the centre-periphery divide in Russia will address the aforementioned limitations. It is also suggested that the centre-periphery categories should be refined. In particular, one could consider various types of agents in the regions' news stories. The tentative agent types would be officials, the public, individuals, etc. The picture aspect of news could be explored in greater detail. Possible options would be: stock photography vs. authentic photography, the images of accidents such as a fire, a car crash, etc. Each of these aspects could be an object of a separate study.

To account for the regions' centre-periphery characteristics, the present study probed into the production and reception factors of the regions' representation in the news. However, the researcher did not have enough information on RIA Novosti production practices and readership. Interpretation of the regions' centre-periphery inferences (either

those drawn from this study, or news ones) in the light of the production and reception constraints of a media would be a task for future studies that look at the production or the reception aspect of the news specifically.

The fact that the largest and the most popular news agency of Russia represents most provincial regions of the country in the negative light is alarming. The peripheral representation of most of Russia's places may contribute to sustaining the centre-periphery divide within the country and the unhealthy sentiments that accompany it. This is why more media studies of the centre-periphery dichotomy are needed. The present study is a small contribution to raising awareness about the power of media to socially construct reality.

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